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**The Experience of Labour Market Disadvantage:
A Comparison of Temporary Agency Workers in Italy and the
UK**

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is my own composition, based on my own work, with acknowledgements of other sources, and has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

Alessio Bertolini

Acknowledgments

These (almost) five years in Edinburgh have been a wonderful life experience, which have enriched me far beyond my PhD studies. It might be almost impossible to thank all the people who have accompanied me during this experience, but I'll try my best.

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Abstract

In the past decades, European labour markets have undergone profound changes, witnessing a process of liberalisation and flexibilisation, in part through the spread of various forms of atypical employment. These new forms of employment have been argued to be of generally lower quality than standard employment, presenting several disadvantages across a range of employment-related dimensions. Nevertheless, the disadvantages experienced by atypical workers are argued to differ depending on nationally specific institutional settings, as employment regulations, welfare institutions and collective representation are commonly claimed to play a significant role in the shaping of disadvantage.

Within the field of comparative political economy, a literature has emerged dealing with issues of dualisation and insider-outsider divides associated with these new forms of employment, mainly focusing on institutional divides in employment and welfare protection and political representation between standard and atypical workers and their consequences in terms of social inequalities. Authors within this literature have argued divides to be different across groups of countries within Europe. Specifically, an important distinction has been claimed to exist between Liberal countries, where divides are argued to be limited, and Southern European countries, where they are said to be among the highest. But this literature has mostly considered disadvantages from an institutional perspective, without empirically investigating whether institutional divides actually translate into individual disadvantages. At the same time, within sociology, authors have investigated individual disadvantages experienced by atypical workers under the broad concept of precariousness. Nevertheless, these scholars have not provided a systematic analysis of the relation between different institutional frameworks and individual disadvantages. This thesis aims at partly bridging these two literatures, by providing an analysis of how different institutional settings impact on disadvantages as experienced at the individual level.

To do this, this thesis explores the disadvantages experienced by a specific category of atypical workers, namely temporary agency workers. It focuses on two countries which have been argued to present very different institutional divides across a broad range of employment-related dimensions. The UK is seen as the main example of Liberal country in the European context, providing limited employment protection to all workers, a fragmented system of industrial relations and a social protection system mainly based on means-testing and mostly aimed at poverty prevention. In contrast, Italy has been considered one of the European countries with the most highly segmented labour market, with high employment protection for core workers but very little for workers at the margin. At the same time, both its industrial relations system and its social protection system are said to strongly discriminate against people in atypical forms of employment. These claims are explored through semi-structured interviews with temporary agency workers in the service sector, trade unionists and other relevant stakeholders involved in atypical employment.

The study demonstrates that temporary agency workers in the two countries experience partly different disadvantages. Although differences in the institutional settings can be said to contribute to explaining these differences, the analysis reveals a more complex picture. I show that institutional divides do not necessarily translate into individual disadvantages, as they interact among each other and with other factors in moulding individual experiences in a variety of ways. At the same time, individual disadvantages are present even when no institutional divide exists. Thus, the study argues that considering disadvantages only in terms of institutional divides oversimplifies a more complex and varied reality, and calls for more attention to be paid to how institutional divides are translated into individual disadvantages.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Atypical Employment and Labour Market Divides

In the past few decades, European labour markets have undergone profound transformations as a result of globalisation, deindustrialisation and technological change (Häusermann and Palier, 2008; Kalleberg, 2009). Among these, one of the most prominent has been the spread of atypical employment, which differs from the full-time permanent employment relationship which came to be seen as 'standard' during the industrial age (Castel, 2002; Fudge and Strauss, 2014). These new forms of employment have been introduced in order to make labour markets more flexible, in an attempt to adapt them to the needs of post-industrial economies (Esping-Andersen and Regini, 2001). Nevertheless, it has been widely argued that these new forms of employment are of lower quality compared to their standard counterparts, producing, among others, more employment insecurity, worse working conditions and scant collective representation (Rodgers and Rodgers, 1989; Barbier, 2004). Furthermore, these atypical forms of employment have been claimed to give access to more limited income protection, given that European welfare states were designed after Second World War for industrial societies characterised by standard employment relationships, and are ill-equipped to deal with the risks associated with these new forms of employment in post-industrial societies (Bonoli, 2005). Altogether, the emergence of these forms of employment has been said to foster new inequalities in post-industrial labour markets between those in full-time, permanent employment and non-standard workers (Kenworthy, 2008). Some scholars have even postulated the existence of an insider-outsider divide where insiders are generally identified as those in full-time, permanent jobs, whereas outsiders are those in atypical employment and the unemployed (Lindbeck and Snower, 2001; Rubery, 2006).

The disadvantages experienced by atypical workers are argued to be different in every country, as is the divide between standard and atypical workers. Different institutional frameworks are argued to influence the disadvantages experienced by atypical workers and in turn in leading to a divide with standard workers, either by reducing it, fostering it or even creating it from scratch (Barbier, 2011; Palier and Thelen, 2012). Scholars variously emphasised the role played by labour market reforms, employment regulations, social protection schemes and industrial relations systems in shaping the disadvantages atypical workers face in various countries, as well as the gulf between atypical and standard workers (Davidsson and Naczyk, 2009). Overall, a distinction has been drawn between Liberal regimes, with deregulated labour markets and mostly flat-rate social protection, and Continental countries, which have

deregulated their labour markets only at the margins, and rely predominantly on contribution-based systems of social protection (Esping-Andersen and Regini, 2001; Eichhorst and Marx, 2010). While the latter have been claimed to have greatly increased employment and social protection divides, the former have been argued to have contained inequalities in both employment and social protection between people with different employment statuses, allowing flexibility to manifest mostly through wage inequalities (DiPrete et al., 2006; Barbieri 2009). Within the Continental group, Southern European countries have been argued to occupy an extreme position, with an even wider gap in both employment and social protection between those in standard and those in atypical employment (Polavieja, 2005; Berton et al., 2015). Nevertheless, authors within this literature have not empirically investigated whether these institutional divides translate into individual disadvantages.

This thesis investigates the disadvantages experienced by one specific category of atypical workers, namely temporary agency workers. In order to investigate the role employment-related institutions play in shaping those disadvantages, two countries with very different employment and welfare frameworks, namely Italy and the UK, are compared. Comparing these countries allows me to investigate whether and how different institutional divides translate into differently experienced disadvantages at the individual level.

The study demonstrates that Temporary Agency (TA) workers in Italy and the UK experience somewhat different disadvantages compared to their standard counterparts and that the different institutional configurations of labour markets, industrial relations and welfare systems do indeed play an important role in explaining those country differences. Nevertheless, there is necessarily no close correspondence between the divides shaped by the institutional framework and experienced disadvantages. Other non-institutional factors are shown to be important in shaping individual disadvantages, as well as the interaction between those and institutional factors.

1.2 Disadvantages Experienced by TA Workers in Italy and the UK

Disadvantages derived from atypical employment arrangements have been variously conceptualised in the academic literature. With some degree of oversimplification, we can say that scholars from two main fields have studied employment-related disadvantages. On the one hand, within political economy, authors in the literature on dualism have focused on labour market institutions and welfare institutions and how they directly or indirectly engender a differentiated set of rights and entitlements for people in different employment categories

(Davidsson and Naczyk, 2009; Emmenegger et al., 2012). As the name suggests, they hypothesise a ‘dualistic’ structure, where a divide exists between those in standard (insiders) and those in other employment arrangements (outsiders). On the other hand, within sociology, authors in the precariousness literature have focused on the individual situation of insecurity and vulnerability derived from employment status and how this is shaped by the interaction between socio-demographic characteristics and labour market institutions, and, more broadly, by the socio-economic system (Barbier, 2011; Kalleberg, 2013).

Considering the disadvantages from an institutional perspective, the literature on dualism has hitherto largely ignored the issue at the individual level, assuming that institutional divides will translate into individual disadvantages. By contrast, scholars in the literature on precariousness have taken a more individual perspective, investigating how disadvantages are shaped by the interaction between individual and contextual characteristics. However, they have not necessarily focused on the divides engendered by the institutional settings. This research tries to partially bridge these two streams of literature, exploring the disadvantages TA workers experience compared to standard employees and how this can be attributed to the institutional configuration of the two countries. In order to do so it considers the actually lived experience of these workers, in the conviction that individual perceptions of workers are fundamental in order to grasp whether institutional divides translate into actual disadvantages from the workers’ point of view, and what other factors contribute to shaping those disadvantages.

The research compares the disadvantages experienced by TA workers in two European countries which can be regarded as polar cases in the European context, having followed very different paths towards labour market liberalisation and presenting different employment and welfare regimes. The UK is characterised by a Liberal employment regime, with weak employment protection for all workers, in line with that of other Anglo-Saxon countries (Pochic et al., 2003). It has deregulated hiring and firing practices and legislative protections from unfair dismissal are comparatively loose (Deakin and Reed, 2001; Koslowski and McLean, 2015). The UK is a Liberal welfare regime, relying on a Beveridgean system of social protection aimed at poverty reduction and leaving a prominent role for private welfare schemes (Esping-Andersen, 1990; Taylor-Gooby and Larsen, 2004; Clasen and Goerne, 2011).

By contrast, Italy can be considered a latecomer in labour market deregulation, and flexibilisation has mostly happened at the margins, initially only in order to integrate social groups with low labour market attachment (Boeri and Garibaldi, 2007; Berton et al., 2009; Checchi and Leonardi, 2016). Employment protection for core workers, namely those in full-

time, permanent employment in medium-large firms, is high in comparative perspective and has been little modified in recent reforms (Lodovici and Semenza, 2008; Jessoula et al., 2011; Fumagalli, 2017). Italy has a sub-protective welfare regime, with a Bismarckian system of social security but limited protection for those on low means (Matsaganis et al., 2003; Jessoula et al. 2010; Durazzi, 2015). As in other Southern European countries, the family has been shown to play a significant role in complementing and even substituting for public social protection (Naldini and Guerrero Jurado, 2009). According to the literature, the status of atypical workers is structured by very different institutional frameworks. They thus represent excellent cases for exploring how institutions contribute to shaping disadvantages actually perceived by atypical workers and how they influence the experienced divide between those in standard and those in atypical employment.

The research focuses on temporary agency workers employed in low and medium-skilled service occupations. Given that the large increase in atypical jobs in post-industrial countries is concentrated in certain occupations within the service sector (Kenworthy, 2005; Häusermann and Schwander, 2012), workers in declining sectors, namely the manufacturing and agricultural one, have not been considered in the analysis. Besides, the higher concentration of temporary agency jobs in the service sector and the fact that countries are moving increasingly towards a service-based economy (Gregg and Wardsworth, 1999; Pontusson, 2005; Gallie, 2007) make an analysis of jobs in this sector relevant for understanding future trends in the European context. The research was carried out through qualitative interviews with a number of temporary agency workers in Bologna and in Edinburgh and with a number of actors involved in temporary agency work. These two cities have been chosen as they present significant similarities in a number of socio-demographic and economic characteristics.

Comparison of the disadvantages between TA workers in Italy and in the UK is structured around three employment-related dimensions. The first, the *employment dimension*, considers issues of employment security, focusing on employment protection and employment opportunities. The second, the *work dimension*, investigates the experience at the workplace, in terms of pay and working conditions, including working time, job content and relations with colleagues, but also possibilities for individual and collective representation. Finally, the *income protection dimension* explores disadvantages related to a number of social risks, namely unemployment, sickness and retirement. These dimensions are meant to incorporate the most significant areas where TA workers might experience disadvantages, thus providing a global picture of the experienced divide between them and standard workers in the two

countries analysed. For each dimension, hypotheses were drawn from the institutional divides stemming from the institutional configurations in the two countries. The empirical part investigated whether and how these institutional divides translated into experienced disadvantages at the individual level.

The findings reveal a complex relationship between institutional divides and the actually experienced disadvantages. In some cases, institutional divides have not necessarily translated into individual disadvantages while in other, often overlooked, institutional characteristics play a more important role. Moreover, while certain individual disadvantages were perceived as normal and legitimate, others were considered unfair. Furthermore, a number of factors besides labour market and welfare institutions are shown to be significant in shaping experienced divides, including socio-demographic characteristics, hirers' behaviour and family support. Thus, the differences between the two countries can only be partly attributed to their different institutional frameworks. This thesis therefore argues against any form of 'institutional determinism' in diagnosing individually experienced divides among different groups of workers, and suggests a need to consider the interplay between multiple factors that shape the disadvantages actually experienced by TA workers.

1.3 Chapter Outline

Chapter 2 critically discusses the literature that has informed my research. I first introduce the concept of 'dualism' and trace its historical development from labour economics in the 1970s up to its recent popularity within the comparative social policy literature. The sociological literature on precarity/precariousness is then reviewed, arguing that it provides an analytical complement to the dualism literature for investigating disadvantages in the labour market. I also discuss the importance of considering those disadvantages from an individual perspective and suggest how this can contribute to enhancing our understanding of employment-related divides. In the second part of the chapter, the analytical framework is then outlined. The three dimensions which structure the empirical analysis are introduced: employment experience, in-job experience and income protection experience. For each dimension the relevant comparative literature which helped me formulate research hypotheses is discussed.

Chapter 3 presents the research design. I show how a comparative framework is needed to best explore the impact of institutional arrangements on individual disadvantages. I also introduce the two national cases which have been selected and elaborate on how they represent contrasting institutional settings within the European context as regards several employment-

related institutions. Furthermore, I justify the empirical focus on temporary agency work, which represents a common form of atypical employment both in Italy and in the UK and has fairly similar characteristics in the two countries. In the second part of the chapter, the methodology is explained and justified, along with the data collection and analysis and the relevant ethical issues involved in the research.

Chapter 4 provides a detailed comparison of the relevant institutional frameworks for the analysis of disadvantages of TA workers in the two countries. In particular, I discuss the regulation of the temporary agency sector, employment regulation and the income protection system. In each case, I highlight salient differences for TA and standard workers. I also show that, although these macro-institutional characteristics closely reflect those highlighted in the comparative dualism literature, specific micro-institutional features might contribute to shaping disadvantages at the individual level. This helps the refinement of hypotheses for the empirical analysis.

Chapter 5 analyses the employment experience dimension. I first map the employment bibliographies of interviewees in the two countries, showing that two main employment paths are present, of which one is only present in Italy. I then consider the role of temporary agency work (TAW) in employment biographies and show how it is strongly influenced by the hirers' reasons for employing TA workers which, in turn, is strongly shaped by the different institutional framework in the two countries. In the UK, employers take on TA workers only for short periods in cases of labour shortages or to use TAW as a screening device. In Italy, by contrast, employers tend to use TAW not only for these reasons, but also as a way to avoid hiring workers on a permanent basis. I then compare the implications for the individual experience of TA workers. The second part of the chapter analyses the experience of employment precariousness from a static perspective. It shows that, for a certain group of workers in Italy, the experience was very similar to workers in the UK, despite the different employment regulations. The last part of the chapter considers the role of public employment agencies as an alternative to private employment agencies in looking for work. I show that public employment services did not constitute an alternative to temporary agencies (TAs) in the eyes of the interviewees in either country, albeit for very different reasons.

Chapter 6 discusses work experience. In the first part, it is shown that TA workers in Italy and in the UK experience very similar disadvantages in a number of working conditions including pay, working time, relations with colleagues and job content, notwithstanding partly different regulations. I argue that this is mainly due to the intrinsic characteristics of TAW, but also results from several forms of discrimination, despite formal equality provided by the

institutional framework. The second part of the chapter analyses disadvantages in both individual and collective representation in the two countries. Individual representation appears generally weak, as in both countries TA workers experience limited bargaining power. I argue that the experience can be classified into three categories of increasing imbalance of power between workers and hirers. The experience of collective representation shows similarities but also significant differences between the two countries which can be attributed to the different institutional framework. In both countries, TA workers had limited opportunities for collective representation for very similar reasons, despite the different organisation of collective representation in the two countries.

Chapter 7 considers TA workers' experience of income protection. After briefly describing the interviewees' experience of income insecurity, disadvantages in income protection for a number of social risks are analysed, that is: unemployment, sickness and retirement. For each of these social risks, TA workers in both countries experience disadvantages compared to standard workers. Nevertheless, I argue that these disadvantages only partly reflect institutional characteristics of the income protection system. In unemployment protection, the Italian contributory system appears to provide a sense of inclusion which cannot be read off from the analysis of the institutional system alone, while the British system, mostly means-tested, was mainly experienced as exclusionary and stigmatising. In sickness protection, the different legal employment status of TA workers in the two countries granted protection equal to standard workers in Italy but only limited protection in the UK. British TA workers experience serious disadvantages, as they are not entitled to contractual sick pay. Finally, with respect to retirement, in both countries TA workers feel disadvantaged. Nevertheless, while in Italy those disadvantages were experienced only by those with irregular working histories, in the UK lack of entitlement to contractual pension schemes made all TA workers worse off. The second part of the chapter shows the role of private sources in the experience of income protection, namely formal credit and the family. While disadvantages in relation to formal credit were similar in the two countries, the family provides a more encompassing income protection role in Italy compared to the UK and is often an effective substitutive form of income protection to the public social protection system.

The final chapter draws the main conclusions for each dimension. Furthermore, findings from the analysis are connected to broader debates in the dualism and the precariousness literatures. I argue that the analysis of individual experiences shapes our understanding of the impact of institutional divides in contemporary labour markets and it can add to the current academic

knowledge on contemporary divides in the labour market. Additionally, the chapter highlights possible directions for future research.

2. Towards an Analytical Framework

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews the relevant literature which has studied the relation between institutional settings and disadvantages among atypical workers and which this thesis draws from. The question of how institutional arrangements affect disadvantages among atypical workers has been analysed by scholars in two main streams of literature: the dualisation/dualism literature and the precariousness literature.

Authors in the literature on dualism have considered disadvantages in relative terms, in relation to those holding standard employment contracts, and they have therefore conceptualised disadvantages in terms of ‘divides’ between atypical and standard workers. Furthermore, they have directly investigated how institutions shape disadvantages, making it a valuable approach in answering the research question of this thesis. Nevertheless, I argue that the analysis of disadvantage in the dualism literature has remained mostly anchored to a formalistic conceptualisation of disadvantage, referring to lack of rights and entitlements, with limited insights into the actual disadvantages ‘outsiders’ face. Therefore, scholars in the dualism literature have *de facto* ignored the role institutions play at the individual level, in a way assuming that given some institutional divides, individual disadvantages automatically follow.

For analysis from an individual perspective, I argue that the literature on precariousness provides an interesting, yet partly different, approach to draw from. Although this literature does not focus directly on institutions, it provides a useful tool to investigate disadvantages stemming from atypical employment using an individual perspective. By using individuals as a unit of analysis, it avoids a deterministic relation of cause-effect between institutional and individually-experienced disadvantages, allowing for interactions between institutional arrangements, individual characteristics and the broader socio-economic context. I will argue that in order to understand how institutions affect the disadvantages atypical workers face, it is constructive to draw from both approaches if we are to avoid a deterministic interpretation of the relation between institutions and disadvantages.

The first part of the chapter critically discusses the dualism literature and how it relates to other theoretical perspectives in the analysis of employment-related disadvantages. Section 2.2 introduces the concept of dualism, briefly reviewing its early theorisations. Section 2.3 shows more recent theories of dualism, mostly from the political economy literature, which try to explain recent labour market developments in comparative perspective. Section 2.4 explains

the main insights the analysis of the individual disadvantages has provided and shows the contribution this can offer in understanding the impact of institutions on individual disadvantages.

2.2 Dualism: Conceptualising Institutionally-driven Disadvantages

Theories of dualism emerged in the field of labour economics to explain the existence of low paid, insecure, dead-end employment in mature industrial societies. In the three decades after World War II, industrial capitalist societies have been argued to be characterised by what has been called the ‘standard employment relationship’ (SER), featuring full-time, permanent contracts between a single employer and an employee (Castel, 2002; Debels, 2005). It has been said that the centrality of this form of employment for the functioning of industrial economies and for social cohesion meant that many employment and social protection rights in industrial countries were legally tailored to standard employment (Esping-Andersen, 1990; Bonoli, 2005). Nevertheless, some authors highlighted that a minority of the working population continued to be employed in unstable, low-paid jobs with limited career opportunities, which were systematically disadvantaged compared to standard jobs (Rubery, 1978). The survival of these forms of employment in mature industrial societies was initially explained by neoclassical economic theory in terms of mismatch between labour supply and demand. Orthodox neoclassical theorists argued that given that those different categories of workers were imperfect substitutes for each other in terms of skill and productivity, they prevented the labour market from clearing, impeding access higher-quality jobs for certain workers (Doeringer and Piore, 1971).

Other labour economists distanced themselves from this explanation, arguing for the existence of an institutionally-driven segmentation in the labour market, in which one segment is systematically disadvantaged in a number of employment and social rights (Rubery, 1978). Two main theories of labour market segmentation were developed in the 1970s: dual labour market theory and radical theory. Both theories postulated the existence of two distinct labour market segments shaped by labour market institutions (Doeringer and Piore, 1971; Reich et al., 1973). The two theories differed in the importance given to different institutional factors in the creation of a segmented labour market, with dual labour market theory focusing on in-firm training as a factor influencing employers’ willingness to retain workers and radical theory focusing on the employers’ control of the workforce. Nevertheless, both theories adopted a different approach from orthodox neoclassical theories to explain the existence of lower quality employment, postulating the centrality of labour market institutions in the

persistence of 'disadvantaged' employment arrangements. Hence, rather than being a passive agent within structural economic forces, institutions came to be seen as a mediating factor in shaping the existence of a segment of the labour force employed in lower quality jobs.

Other labour economists argued for an institutionally-driven segmentation of the labour market. Lindbeck and Snower (1988) developed an alternative framework to conceptualise dualism in the labour market: the insider-outsider theory. In contrast to dual labour market and radical theories, which attributed the divide to employers' behaviour, insider-outsider theory explained labour market divides through workers' strategies, given that the incumbents' (insiders') market power allows them to bargain for higher wages and better employment conditions. Although initially developed to mainly explain the persistence of unemployment, by illustrating how wages may be pushed above the market-clearing level, it was applied to other situations in which some labour market participants had more privileges than others, including permanent and temporary workers, unionised and non-unionised workers and workers with low and high seniority. The phrasing of dualism in terms of a divide between 'insiders' and 'outsiders' has brought the attention to the fact that outsiders are somehow excluded or left 'out' from something insiders can instead enjoy, thus loading dualism with a connotation of lack of integration. As we will see, this jargon has become widespread in contemporary debates on employment-related disadvantages, which try to emphasise the idea of exclusion of certain categories of workers from employment and social rights.

All these theories highlighted the mediating role of labour market institutions in shaping disadvantaged segments within the labour market. Nevertheless, most dualism studies ignored cross-country differences in the functioning of labour market institutions, assuming universal mechanisms were in place in all capitalist industrial societies. This reflected nomothetic tendencies typical of much of labour economics, which has historically focused mostly on universal mechanisms rather than on idiosyncratic ones. Despite a few exceptions (see, for instance, Rubery, 1978; Eyraud et al., 1990), most authors underplayed cross-country differences in dualism, concentrating their studies on the American labour market (and, to a lesser extent, on the British one) and assuming common tendencies in other capitalist countries.

The review of the early dualism literature has been intended to present the concept of dualism. As has been shown, dualism theories conceptualise employment-related disadvantages in terms of a divide between different employment segments, suggesting a 'dualistic' structure of the labour market. Within this framework, labour market institutions are said to be an important factor in shaping these disadvantages, excluding one labour market segment from

rights and entitlements. As is discussed in the next section, the concepts of dualism and of insider-outsider divide have been re-used in the political economy literature to account for more recent employment-related disadvantages, especially after the flexibilisation reforms implemented in European countries from the 1980s onwards. In common with earlier conceptualisations, scholars in political economy emphasise the role of labour market institutions in structuring the labour market in a segmented way and in creating divides between different employment categories, and more specifically between standard and atypical workers. However, compared to labour economists, these authors pay much more attention to cross-country differences in institutional arrangements. Most of these scholars generally take a European perspective, whose diversity among member countries has been apt to cross-country comparisons. This brings these authors close to the empirical question at the root of this thesis, which is specifically focused on employment-related disadvantages among atypical workers in Europe.

2.3 Institutional Divides in Post-industrial Labour Markets

The literature on dualism helps understand the role institutions have been considered to play in creating a divide between standard workers and the growing number of workers in atypical forms of employment in contemporary labour markets. As is shown, atypical workers have been argued to face systematic disadvantages compared to standard workers in a number of employment realms, but authors in this literature also highlight notable differences between countries depending on their institutional arrangements. The review of this literature helps pinpoint the main dimensions in which institutions are argued to have contributed to shaping a divide between standard and atypical workers. These dimensions are later used in the analytical framework (see section 2.6) to identify the main disadvantages atypical workers should face in different institutional settings. These dimensions have contributed to structuring the empirical investigation. Furthermore, this literature provides a categorisation of European countries depending on the institutional divide between standard and atypical workers. This categorisation has guided the case selection for the empirical analysis, as Italy and the UK have been chosen as two countries presenting different institutional divides between standard and atypical workers.

Labour markets have undergone deep changes in the past few decades. Among these, the erosion of the so-called standard employment relationship and the parallel expansion of atypical jobs, featuring limited employment protection, low skill and low pay, has been among the most prominent (Rodgers and Rodgers, 1989; Castel, 2002; Green, 2006). These new jobs

closely resemble the ‘outsider’ jobs discussed by labour economists in the previous section. The explanation for the expansion of these jobs given by many economists (see, for instance, Acemoglu, 2002) but also sociologists (e.g. Castells, 2000) has been mainly structural. Technological change, increased competition, globalisation and post-industrialisation have all been cited as relevant socio-economic factors that have led to the expansion of these new forms of employment (Kenworthy, 2005; Green, 2006; Gallie, 2007; Kalleberg, 2013). However, these socio-structural explanations have failed to account for what appear to be differences in the quantity and quality of these jobs across countries.

For this reason, some scholars in the political economy literature have argued that structural factors alone cannot explain the expansion of atypical jobs and that it is important to investigate the mediating role of institutions in translating structural pressures into social outcomes if we are to understand the expansion of atypical employment in post-industrial labour markets (Häusermann and Palier, 2008). In that sense, they closely reflect earlier conceptualisations of dualism, which introduced institutions as a prominent variable in explaining the existence of disadvantaged labour market segments. According to these theories, different institutional frameworks can explain variation in labour market outcomes across countries, despite common structural pressures towards flexibility (Emmenegger et al., 2012). Specifically, the labour market reforms conducted by most countries in the past few decades have been argued to be the main causal explanation for the structuration of contemporary labour markets and for the expansion of atypical employment (Esping-Andersen and Regini, 2001).

In a seminal comparative study on dualist tendencies in European labour markets, Goldthorpe (1985) argued that labour market deregulation as it had been implemented in Liberal countries, such as the UK, fostered employment dualism, as market interactions pushed towards dualisation without an institutional constraint to counterbalance this trend. As power in employment relations was left to market forces, employers tried to increase flexibility by relying on sub-contracting and non-standard employment, pushing an increasing share of the labour force into secondary labour markets. Goldthorpe found an opposite tendency in Corporatist countries, such as Sweden, Norway and Austria, where social partners together with a strong role of the State in labour market regulation could structure the labour market in a more inclusive way, reducing the divide between different labour market segments. Continental European countries, such as France, Germany and Italy, were placed somewhere in-between, as they adopted a more timid and inconsistent approach, alternating periods where social partners and the State seemed to foster inclusiveness to periods in which dualist

tendencies predominated. Following Goldthorpe's argument, Brown and King (1988) argued that direct concertation of state, unions and employers' organisations, typical of Corporatist countries, produced more inclusive labour market outcomes than in Liberal countries, since markets alone would have pushed towards a dualisation of the labour market.

As Continental European countries promoted deeper labour market reforms to increase flexibility, a different view emerged. More recent scholars in the comparative political economy literature have drawn a clear distinction between Liberal, mostly Anglo-Saxon, and Continental European countries (Esping-Andersen and Regini, 2001; Thelen, 2014). They argue that Liberal countries have historically provided more limited employment protection than their Continental counterparts and they have opted for a thorough liberalisation of labour markets, providing limited employment protection for all workers. By contrast, Continental European countries have pursued a flexibilisation 'at the margin' (Boeri and Garibaldi, 2007) or a 'partial and targeted' deregulation (Barbieri and Scherer, 2009), liberalising atypical contracts but making little change to the existing protection for standard workers (Eichhorst and Marx, 2010; Bentolila et al., 2012).

The consequence of those different reforms has been argued to be a higher insider-outsider divide in Continental Europe compared to Liberal countries, since the former have pursued only a partial flexibilisation, where costs are mostly borne by atypical workers, while the latter have implemented a more encompassing flexibilisation, where protection has been reduced across employment statuses (Esping-Andersen and Regini, 2001; Debels, 2005). Within Continental European countries, Mediterranean/Southern European countries have been claimed to constitute an extreme case of dualism, as employment protection for standard employment has remained comparatively very high, while at the same time there has been a relative deregulation of atypical contracts (Barbieri and Sestito, 2012). Thus, by putting European countries on a continuum, Southern European countries are argued to occupy one extreme, being the most dualised (Lodovici, 2001a; Toharia and Malo, 2001; Polavieja, 2005; Berton et al., 2015; Molina and López-Roldán, 2015), while Liberal countries are claimed to be among the least, together with the Scandinavian countries (Esping-Andersen and Regini, 2001; Polavieja, 2005; Koslowski and McLean 2015). However, the latter have followed a different liberalisation process, combining labour market deregulation with generous income support and active labour market policies for the unemployed (Eichhorst and Marx, 2015).

Moreover, scholars in political economy argue not only that Continental European countries have become dualised in terms of employment and social protection, but that this gap in employment protection can explain the higher spread of atypical employment in Continental

European vis-à-vis Liberal countries (Eichhorst and Marx, 2010). They claim that the way employers make use of non-standard contracts varies depending on the incentives and constraints provided by institutional regulations and this, in turn, explains the relative prevalence of atypical employment in different countries (Booth et al., 2002; Eichhorst and Marx, 2015). For instance, Rodgers (1989) claims that in a country with highly regulated standard employment such as France, employers will find it more convenient to use temporary employment in order to avoid tight employment regulations. However, in a country like the UK, where employment regulations are quite loose for both standard and atypical workers, there are fewer incentives on the employers' side to use temporary workers. This argument is supported by empirical studies investigating the prevalence of atypical employment in different countries (e.g. Polavieja, 2005; Hevenstone, 2010; Eichhorst and Marx, 2015). These studies find that, in countries with high protection for standard employment and low entry barriers to atypical employment, such as most Continental European countries, the use of atypical employment is comparatively high, as employers are thought to use atypical employment to circumvent tight dismissal regulations for standard employment.

Furthermore, the divide between standard and non-standard workers has been claimed to be also reflected in collective and political representation (Rueda, 2005; Davidsson and Naczyk, 2009). Dualism theories have argued that a divide in collective representation exists at the workplace, where unions have been seen as representing the interests of 'insiders', i.e. standard workers, at the expense of other workers (Lindbeck and Snower, 2001; Palier and Thelen, 2010). Within this context, countries where unions have comparatively more bargaining power and whose constituency is mostly constituted by standard workers, such as those in Continental Europe, have been said to present a greater divide in collective representation. By contrast, countries with lower union power, such as the Liberal countries, or where the higher unionisation rate among atypical workers has had unions supporting pro-outsider policies, such as Scandinavian countries, have been argued to be less dualised (Olsen, 2005; Rueda, 2007; Benassi and Vlandas, 2015). Moreover, atypical workers have been claimed to suffer from a representation deficit in the broader political system, and of being politically alienated and disengaged (Standing, 2011; Marx, 2015). In that respect, the parties traditionally supporting the working classes, such as the Social Democratic parties, have been claimed to tend to privilege the representation of interests of 'insiders' at the expense of atypical workers (Rueda, 2005; Thelen, 2014), fostering a divide between standard and political workers also when it comes to party representation.

Building on the divide between atypical and standard employment, the social policy literature has extended the idea of dualism to social protection (Seleeib-Kaiser et al., 2011). The reason behind this focus lies in the fact that standard employment has historically been not only a source of employment rights but also of social rights, especially social security. Authors in the comparative social policy literature have argued that, compared to the industrial age, where most workers were employed in a standard employment relationship and they were protected by relatively generous social protection schemes, the de-standardisation of employment relationships, which has characterised post-industrial labour markets, has engendered new types of employment statuses, which do not necessarily grant access to the social protection schemes granted to standard workers (Palier and Thelen, 2012).

Considering the issue from a comparative angle, these theories have argued that the Bismarckian/Corporatist welfare systems of Continental Europe are those with the largest insider-outsider divide, as the type of social protection workers have access to strongly depends on their contribution history. More precisely, those who have paid regular contributions have access to contribution-based, generally earnings-related, benefits, while those who have not can only rely on means-tested, flat-rate benefits (Palier and Thelen, 2010; Seleeib-Kaiser et al., 2011). Within this group, some authors have argued that Mediterranean countries again occupy an extreme position, providing more piecemeal and less generous means-tested benefits (Jessoula et al., 2010; Sacchi, 2011). By contrast, welfare systems which are based on means-tested principles, such as those in the Liberal countries, are argued to be more inclusive, as the employment history of a person has less impact on the income protection received, thus providing a more equal access to income protection to all workers. Finally, the Scandinavian countries, whose social protection system is mostly based on universal principles, are argued to be the least dualised (Emmenegger et al., 2012).

DiPrete et al. (2006), by comparing France and the US, provide a different conceptualisation of labour market divides using two dimensions: wage and employment protection. They argue that the deregulated labour market in the US has allowed wage flexibility, thus increasing wage inequality, while in France and in other European countries, where tolerance for income inequality is lower, flexibility has mainly been achieved through the use of temporary and other atypical contracts. Thus, they conclude that there has been a trend towards a 'generalised inequality' (p. 317), which, however, has taken different forms depending on the institutional setting of each country. While the highly deregulated American labour market has seen an increase in income inequality, the partly-liberalised French one has seen an increase in employment security inequality.

A similar argument has been put forward by Maurin and Postel-Vinay (2005), who analysed labour market inequality trends in 13 European countries. They found that countries which allowed wage inequality to grow have seen a more moderate increase in the expansion of atypical employment, suggesting that a trade-off exists between income and employment security. Thus, according to these scholars, Continental European labour markets are not necessarily more dualised than Anglo-Saxon labour markets. What differs is the *type* of labour market divide, one based on wages and the other based on employment contracts. On a similar note, Barbieri (2009) has classified Western countries along two dimensions: an inequality dimension and an insecurity dimension. Liberal countries are the ones characterised by high wage inequality but low job insecurity, while Continental and Mediterranean countries have lower wage inequalities but high job insecurity. Hence, in contrast to previous theories which conceptualised dualism in terms of a divide related to employment protection between standard and atypical workers, these authors argue that dualism can take different forms depending on the labour market under consideration. So, while the divide between atypical and standard employment might be wider in Continental Europe than in Liberal countries, the overall wage inequality, regardless of the type of employment, might be more prominent in Liberal than in Continental countries.

The review of the literature on dualism has highlighted the main institutionally-driven divides that have been identified between standard and atypical workers in European countries. The review shows that atypical workers have been argued to be at a disadvantage compared to their standard counterparts in all of these dimensions, although important differences between countries have been highlighted. These studies offer important insights for this thesis. First of all, they allow to draw an early distinction in dualist outcomes between Liberal, mostly Anglo-Saxon, and Continental European countries, with Southern European countries as an extreme group within the latter. This categorisation has informed the case selection for this thesis. The comparison of insider-outsider divide between these countries is discussed in more detail in section 2.6. For now, it is important to highlight that Italy and the UK have been regarded as polar cases in the European context with respect to the divide between standard and atypical workers, the former belonging to the Southern European group and the latter being an example of a Liberal regime. The institutional characteristics of the two countries are discussed in chapter 3, section 3.2.1.

2.4 Institutions and Disadvantages: Focusing on the Individual

Hitherto, I have considered disadvantage from an institutional perspective, presenting how institutions have been argued to shape disadvantages among atypical workers. Nevertheless, little has been said so far on how these institutional divides translate into individual disadvantages. In order to do this, we have to consider two streams of literature which are intertwined and which closely overlap: the already mentioned literature on dualism and literature on precariousness (Hipp et al., 2015). Scholars from both streams regard institutions as an important factor in shaping disadvantages in the labour market. Nevertheless, while dualist scholars, as we have already seen, adopt what can be argued to be a deterministic approach, assuming a direct connection between institutional and individual disadvantages, authors in the literature on precariousness adopt a different perspective, considering how institutional characteristics, individual-level variables and the broader socio-economic context interact with each other in creating a situation of ‘precariousness’ or ‘precarity’ in which the individual is not fully socially included. I argue that it is constructive to draw also from the literature on precariousness if we are to fully understand the link between institutional settings and the disadvantages they produce. Moreover, by considering individuals as units of analysis and not only institutions, we avoid adopting an overly deterministic approach, allowing for variation in the impact institutions may have on individuals and exploring possible complex interactions between individual situations and institutional arrangements.

The literature on dualism has conceptualised the disadvantages experienced by ‘outsiders’ in different ways. As already mentioned, the concept of ‘outsider’ itself suggests that somebody is excluded, that she does not have access to or she is not part of something. In its original version, outsiders were identified as those who were employed in the secondary labour market. While workers in the primary labour market were generally unionised, had access to high pay and fringe benefits, relatively high job security and well established internal career paths, workers in the secondary labour market only had access to low wages and limited fringe benefits, had limited employment stability and little employment protection and had few opportunities for career progression (Doeringer and Piore, 1971). Hence, disadvantages were mostly associated with worse employment and working conditions compared to standard workers.

The insider-outsider theory adopted a more general stance, considering as an outsider everyone who, in a specific domain, did not have the same contractual power which was afforded to others (insiders), and who therefore could not bargain for the same pay and employment conditions of insiders (Lindbeck and Snower, 1988). Here, disadvantages were associated with

any right and entitlement which could not be negotiated because of a weaker bargaining position. Thus, depending on the field in which insider-outsider theory was applied, outsiders might be the unemployed, those employed in the informal sector, the non-unionised, those employed short-term or the unskilled workers (Lindbeck and Snower, 2001).

The conceptualisation of disadvantages has partly changed in more recent decades. Although many studies have continued to identify outsiders as those employed in low-skilled occupations, generally in the service sector but also in peripheral jobs in the manufacturing sector, an increasing number of studies have identified outsiders as those in non-standard employment (Rosenberg, 1991; Rubery, 2006). These new employment arrangements, which have spread after labour market flexibilisation reforms from the 1980s onwards, have been regarded as epitomising ‘outsiderness’, as workers on these employment contracts generally have access to lower pay and worse working conditions, limited employment security and limited bargaining power compared to standard ‘insider’ workers (Rubery, 2006). Like in previous conceptualisations, disadvantages have been related to employment and working conditions, but the employment status has come to be seen as the main source of systematic disadvantages.

Finally, literature on dualism in social protection has identified outsiders as those in reception of social assistance and/or other means-tested benefits, as they are not entitled to the more generous contribution-based benefits and occupational income protection schemes which are granted to insiders (Davidsson and Naczyk, 2009; Palier and Thelen, 2010; Seleeib-Kaiser et al., 2012). Following this definition, outsiders are people with low labour market attachment, such as the long-term unemployed, but also individuals who, because of their intermittent employment experience, or because of their non-standard employment status, have limited access to contributory and/or private income protection schemes (Seleeib-Kaiser et al., 2011). Thus, scholars in the literature on dualism in social protection have switched the focus to disadvantages in income protection rather than in employment and work. Moreover, although not necessarily focusing on people in atypical employment, they have brought attention to the lower income protection that non-standard workers might have access to compared to their standard counterparts, as people working part-time, or those on temporary contracts and the solo self-employed workers might constitute a large part of outsiders in a given country (Emmenegger et al., 2012).

It is clear from this brief review of this literature that ‘outsiders’ are mainly defined in opposition to ‘insiders’. Insiders are those who have access to ‘standard’ rights and entitlements, including pay, working conditions, career prospects, collective representation,

employment security and access to income protection. Outsiders are those who, because of their employment status, are eligible for fewer or more limited rights and entitlements. Nevertheless, these scholars adopt a mostly top-down approach in describing the disadvantages experienced by outsiders, focusing on institutions and investigating which rights and entitlements are granted to individuals with different employment statuses. Therefore, disadvantages are mainly conceptualised in terms of institutional barriers to access rights and entitlements, but little emphasis is given to how these impact the ‘outsider’ in practice and how these institutional divides are individually perceived. In this approach, it appears to be implicitly assumed that institutional divides automatically translate into individual disadvantages, but this assumption is not explored empirically.

Moreover, given the focus in the dualism literature on the macro-characteristics of the institutional setting, these authors pay little attention to individual socio-demographic characteristics and how these might interact with institutional arrangements in shaping ‘outsiderness’ or even in counteracting it. Even less attention is paid to possible diversities among ‘outsiders’, given that institutions might have differentiated impacts on diverse groups of individuals and that individuals might ‘need’ or ‘use’ different rights and entitlements in different ways. I argue that in order to avoid simplistic assumptions about the impact of institutional divides on individual disadvantages, it is important to consider the impact of institutions at the individual level. I therefore now turn to another stream of literature which has considered disadvantages from an individual-level: the precariousness literature.

While literature on dualism is strongly rooted in the political economy tradition, literature on precariousness emerged within the field of sociology. Scholars in the precariousness literature take a bottom-up approach in the analysis of employment-related disadvantages. Rather than using institutions as units of analysis, they focus on individuals and, from the analysis of disadvantages they experience, they relate back to the institutional and other contextual factors which caused them. The concept of precariousness dates back to the 1970s and the 1980s when it was used in connection with poverty and social exclusion but not necessarily with employment (Barbier, 2004). Precariousness can be broadly defined as an individual situation of insecurity and vulnerability stemming from a specific social status (Vosko et al., 2003). An individual is regarded as being ‘precarious’ when she is vulnerable to incidents and sudden changes in her life which can disrupt her status. Precariousness entails ‘instability, lack of protection, insecurity and social and economic vulnerability’ (Rodger, 1989, p.3). Thus, a situation of precariousness is closely connected with a risk of social exclusion (Barbier, 2004).

In that respect, the concept of being 'precarious' recalls the idea of being an 'outsider', as a precarious person is not fully integrated into society and she is at risk of being left out.

Most of the literature on precariousness has subsequently concentrated on employment statuses, which might foster a risk of detachment and exclusion from mainstream society. These scholars have increasingly associated precariousness with employment conditions, particularly as new employment arrangements have been seen as the main cause of insecurity and vulnerability in contemporary societies (Kalleberg, 2000; Vosko et al., 2003; Nienhüser, 2005). Thus, similarly to some of the dualist theories, contemporary authors in the precariousness literature have investigated predominantly atypical employment. Scholars studying precariousness agree that people in atypical employment are more likely to be in a situation of precariousness as they tend to present several interrelated disadvantages (Rodgers, 1989; Tucker, 2003; Nienhüser, 2005; Kalleberg, 2014). For instance, they might be subjected to both employment insecurity and low pay or they might present a higher risk of unemployment and have a more limited access to unemployment protection.

However, precariousness does not have to be equated with non-standard employment (Fudge, 2005; Keune, 2015). In fact, not all atypical workers can be regarded as precarious, as certain individuals might be voluntarily employed in atypical jobs because this might best suit their life needs or because it is easier to combine those types of jobs with other activities they deem relevant, thus improving their work-life balance (Rodgers, 1989; Zeytinoglu et al., 2004). For instance, a mother might prefer to work part-time to carry out her caring responsibilities or a student might want to take only temporary and seasonal jobs to generate some income while in education. More generally, a person might complement income from an atypical job with that from a permanent job of another member of the household to create their preferred work-life balance.

According to these scholars, precariousness is a multidimensional concept, which includes several interconnected dimensions, both related and unrelated to the labour market, in which an individual faces a vulnerability. It is the cumulative effect of being vulnerable in multiple dimensions at the same time which engenders a situation of precariousness (Rodgers and Rodgers, 1989; Barbier, 2004). Therefore, it is the interaction between individual situations and characteristics, employment regulations, income protection and industrial relations system which might engender a situation of precariousness (Laparra et al., 2004; Kalleberg, 2013). Compared to scholars in the dualism literature, scholars in the literature on precariousness consider disadvantages at the individual level and they are careful to assume that an individual who is not granted a right or an entitlement will automatically experience a disadvantage. They

are instead more interested in considering the interaction between institutional disadvantages, individual characteristics and the macro socio-economic environment in engendering a situation of individual disadvantage. Furthermore, they consider how an individual disadvantage is subjectively perceived, as some disadvantages might be perceived as ‘natural’ and legitimate, while others might be regarded as ‘unfair’. Despite this more articulated approach in the analysis of disadvantages, to my knowledge, this literature offers no systematic qualitative analysis of cross-country differences in precariousness based on institutional and other contextual factors. Therefore, it does not provide an analytical tool to explore the impact of different institutional arrangements on individual disadvantages, with most comparative studies focusing on finding a common definition or precariousness which can travel across borders (see for instance, Tucker, 2003; Barbier, 2011).

This section has reviewed how these two streams of literature have conceptualised individual disadvantages. On the one hand, disadvantage has been defined in terms of ‘outsiderness’, and it has been associated with being excluded from rights and entitlements. On the other hand, it has been thought of as precariousness, which is caused by a complex interaction between institutional barriers and constraints, individual socio-demographic characteristics and the broader socio-economic context. Despite this apparent distinction, these different conceptualisations of employment-related disadvantage closely overlap in reality, as already noted by some authors (e.g. Barbier, 2011; Doogan, 2013; Hipp et al., 2015). For instance, atypical workers might be precarious because they are granted lower employment protection than a standard worker (i.e. labour market outsider), they are less likely to be unionised than a standard employee (i.e. outsider as regards collective representation) and they might not have accrued enough social insurance contributions to access contribution-based benefits (i.e. social protection outsider).

Nevertheless, while the literature on dualism offers a systematic analysis of cross-country differences in institutional configurations and discusses their impacts in terms of institutional divides across a number of employment-related dimensions, to my knowledge no systematic cross-country comparison on the impact of different institutional settings on individual disadvantage is offered by the precariousness literature. Hence, while the dualism literature provides an important analytical framework to investigate institutional configurations engendering a differential set of rights and entitlements between standard and atypical workers, the precariousness literature provides a more apt approach for the study of disadvantages experienced by atypical workers from an individual perspective. Therefore, this thesis draws from both streams of literature in the analysis of the impact of institutions on

individual disadvantages, relying mostly on the dualism literature to identify institutional divides, but exploring the disadvantages empirically at the individual level, and considering the interplay between the institutional setting and individual and contextual factors, as suggested by the precariousness literature. It is thus possible to explore whether and how institutional divides translate into actually experienced disadvantages and how they may interact with other non-institutional factors in shaping an individual situation of disadvantage.

Furthermore, while the literature on dualism considers disadvantage in ‘objective’ terms, considering disadvantages in terms of lack of rights and entitlements, the literature on precariousness is also interested in the ‘subjective’ aspect of disadvantage, considering how disadvantages are perceived at the individual level. I argue that considering both aspects is important for analytical purposes. On the one hand, it allows to distinguish between institutional divides which translate into individual ones and those that do not. On the other hand, it enables us to consider how individual disadvantages are subjectively perceived, as some disadvantages might be regarded as ‘fair’ or legitimate, while others might be experienced as ‘unfair’ or discriminatory.

A final point must be mentioned. While the literature on dualism identifies disadvantages only in relative terms, identifying outsiders always in relation to a group of insiders, the literature on precariousness tends to consider disadvantages in absolute terms, never mind the portion of the workforce who experience the disadvantage. Thus, while in the former, there will always be, by definition, someone in the labour market who does not experience a given disadvantage, in the latter there can be a large portion or even the whole workforce who experience the same disadvantage. For instance, low employment protection for both standard and atypical workers would not be regarded as a disadvantage in the insider-outsider literature, given that the workforce is more or less equally affected; in the precariousness literature it might be considered so, as it might foster a situation of employment insecurity, regardless of the proportion of workers involved. On the contrary, the existence of a two-tier social security system, organised around contribution-based benefits for those who have contributed and means-tested benefits for those without sufficient contributions, may be regarded as segmenting in the dualism literature, but it might not be regarded as such in the precariousness literature, provided that the means-tested benefits are generous enough to provide an adequate source of income security.

I argue that integrating both a relative and an absolute perspective is the most fruitful way of exploring employment-related disadvantages from an individual perspective. Firstly, a group of workers might experience a disadvantage although no institutional divide is in place, given

that they might be more negatively affected than other groups by the same institutional arrangement. Secondly, if we are to take into consideration interactions between different disadvantages, a person who experiences a relative disadvantage in combination with an absolute disadvantage might perceive herself as more ‘excluded’ than a person who experiences only the relative one alone, contributing to aggravating an already existing divide. Finally, given that the experience of being an outsider might be due to cumulative disadvantages, considering both absolute and relative disadvantages is important, as they might both play a role in shaping the person’s situation. We can argue that a person who experiences both a relative and an absolute disadvantage might be worse off than a person who experience only the relative one. Therefore, the thesis considers disadvantages from both an absolute and a relative perspective, considering it important to investigate interactions between different types of disadvantages and how they are individually experienced.

2.5 Analysing Institutionally-driven Disadvantages: A Cross-country Comparison

This section lays out the analytical framework for the thesis. As already discussed in section 2.2, the dualism literature has identified a clear difference in the labour market and social protection structure of Liberal vs. Continental European countries. Among the latter, Southern European countries have been regarded as an extreme case, which places them in an even starker contrast to the Liberal countries. The characteristics of the institutional framework have been argued to produce very different consequences in the insider-outsider divide of workers in the two groups of countries, with Liberal countries being among the least dualised and the Southern European being among the most. Following this literature, the overarching hypothesis of this thesis is that atypical workers in Southern European countries systematically experience deeper and more wide-spread disadvantages compared to atypical workers in Liberal countries. In the following sections, this general hypothesis is re-framed as more specific ones within each of the main employment-related dimensions in which dualist theories have argued for the existence of an insider-outsider divide.

This part of the chapter is organised as follows. Section 2.5.1 defines standard and atypical employment. Section 2.6 introduces the dimensions of disadvantage which are investigated from an individual perspective in the empirical analysis, namely employment (section 2.6.1), work (section 2.6.2) and income protection (section 2.6.3). These are the core dimensions in which the dualism literature has identified a divide between standard and atypical workers. For each dimension, I discuss the main findings from the literature on dualism with respect to the divides between atypical and standard employment. The focus is mostly on comparative

European literature. For each dimension, I formulate some initial hypotheses which have guided the subsequent empirical analysis. Section 2.7 draws the conclusions which lead to discussion of the research design in the following chapter.

2.5.1. Atypical vs. Standard Employment

Any cross-country comparison in labour market divides involves two comparisons: one between countries and another between two groups of workers. As already mentioned, this thesis focuses on two countries, Italy and the UK, and two employment categories: standard and atypical workers. Before discussing the state of the art of dualism literature in different employment-related dimensions, it is relevant to clarify what is meant by standard and atypical employment in order to avoid confusion and misunderstanding in what will be analysed later on. As will be clear from below, atypical or non-standard employment, which are used interchangeably in this thesis, are generally defined as a residual category to what constitutes ‘standard’ (or ‘typical’) employment. It is therefore useful to first discuss how standard employment has been defined.

According to some authors who have studied precariousness, the definition of standard employment varies between countries depending on employment regulations and labour law. Many Continental European countries have the definition of standard employment enshrined in their labour code, such as in France, Spain or Italy. For instance, The Italian *Statuto del Lavoratori* defines standard employment as an open-ended contract with statutory protection against dismissal (Barbier, 2004). Other scholars have noted that this is not the case in the UK labour law, where the distinction between standard and non-standard remains somehow fuzzy (Koslowski and McLean, 2015). Nevertheless, Barbier (2004) argues that, even in the UK, although lacking a legal definition, the practice shows a clear conceptualisation of what is standard or regular employment, that is full-time, permanent employment for a single employer.

In the academic literature, different definitions of standard employment are also used, although they overlap in many respects. A general definition entails any employment relationship which is full-time, permanent and directly hiring by a single employer (see, for instance, Hevenstone, 2010; Eichhorst, 2014). Some authors have added other characteristics, such as working regular hours, over a whole year, primarily at the employer’s premises (Whatman, 1994, cited in Tucker, 2003). Brosnan and Walsh (1996, cited in Tucker, 2003) suggest a similar definition, but they add working between 7 am till 6 pm and only Monday till Friday. Booth

et al. (2002) define standard employment as being ‘employed on a permanent contract, working at the employer’s premises, during the day, and for between 30 and 48 hours per week’ (p.2). Despite differences both from country to country and between researchers, there appears to be a common understanding of what constitutes standard employment, that is a full-time, permanent employment relationship between an employer and an employee which entails some protection against dismissal. This is the definition used in this thesis, unless otherwise specified. As we have seen, this is also the legal definition in Italy, although no equivalent definition exists in the UK.

Although boundaries of atypical employment vary with the definition used, casual and informal work, intermittent and seasonal, fixed-term, temporary agency work and solo self-employment are all types of employment which can be regarded as non-standard or atypical. It is contended whether part-time (permanent) employment should be regarded as non-standard. While some scholars consider it a specific type of atypical employment (see for instance, Vosko et al., 2003; Tucker, 2003), other authors argue that part-time may or may not be included depending on a number of factors, including country-level characteristics (see, for instance, Barbier, 2011; Gumbrell-McCormick, 2011). A part-time employee generally enjoys the same rights and entitlements (though in some cases on a pro-rata) as a standard employee, including employment protection, with the significant difference being the number of hours worked (Hipp et al., 2015). However, non-standard employment arrangements can be part-time as well, including, for instance, fixed-term contracts or temporary agency contracts. Given that the main interest of this thesis is the contract type rather than the number of hours worked, reference to atypical employment will not generally include part-time (permanent) employment, unless specifically mentioned. Atypical work will thus refer to any employment arrangement which is non-permanent.

As it has been defined in the literature as a residual category, it is not surprising that atypical employment includes many different types of employment, which are not necessarily very similar to each other. Hence, within a country, we expect to find high heterogeneity among atypical contracts also as regards their relative differences to standard contracts (Barbier, 2011). For instance, a person working full-time on a four-year fixed-term contract might be considered much closer to ‘standard’ employment than a person working as a solo self-employed in a seasonal job for 18 hours a week. Moreover, both Marshall (1989) and Tucker (2003) state that it is important to bear in mind that different forms of atypical employment may overlap. For example, a person may be working seasonally as a temporary agency worker, or she might be employed temporarily as a quasi-self-employed worker. Furthermore, to make

atypical employment an even less uniform category, we have to remember that some atypical contracts have been crafted by specific national legislation, and therefore they might exist in one country but not in another. For instance, Berton et al. (2012) identify *parasubordinati* contracts (a type of quasi-self-employed contract) as a typically Italian phenomenon. Eichhorst and Tobsch (2014) regard mini-jobs as a peculiar German creation, while, according to Crouch (2015), zero-hour contracts are a specific British invention, with no exact equivalent in other European countries. Differences in the characteristics of atypical employment both within and between countries have led me to choose full-time temporary agency work as the type of atypical employment for which this thesis compares the individual experience of disadvantage in Italy and the UK. The reasons for this choice are explained in detail in section 3.3.

Having clarified different conceptualisations of standard and non-standard/atypical employment, and presented the ones that are used in this thesis, I will now discuss what has hitherto been found on the divide between standard and atypical employment in several employment-related dimensions, adopting a comparative perspective at the European level.

2.6 Dimensions of Disadvantage

Scholars in the dualism literature have identified several employment-related dimensions in which the workforce appears to be present an insider-outsider divide. For instance, Palier and Thelen (2010) mention three areas in which they find an ongoing process of dualisation in Germany and France, namely labour market, welfare and industrial relations. Similarly, Davidsson and Naczyk (2009) identify three institutional realms in which the process of dualisation has unfolded in post-industrial countries, which are the labour market, the social protection system and political representation. Furthermore, Emmenegger et al. (2012) analyse divides between insiders and outsiders in Western countries over a variety of social fields, namely labour markets, welfare state and political integration. I have decided to focus on three core dimensions:

- 1) Employment
- 2) Work
- 3) Income Protection

We can argue that these include all the most significant core experiential dimensions related to being an atypical worker, as they include the employment conditions, the actual working conditions at the workplace and the social protection when the person is unable to work.

It is important at this stage to clearly distinguish what I mean by these three dimensions, particularly the difference between employment and work, which are related, but different, concepts (see, for instance Letourneux, 1998). Employment dualism refers to any divide which is directly attributable to the employment status of individuals (in this case, between standard and atypical employment). This includes employment protection, employment stability and possibilities of employment transition. Work dualism includes any divide in the actual conditions at the workplace. This entails pay, general working conditions, such as working time, job content and relations with colleagues, and workers' representation, both individual and collective. While the employment dimension focuses on employment paths and employment trajectories, the work dimension considers the practical conditions related to job characteristics. Finally, income protection dualism considers any divide in protection against income loss related to the impossibility to work. Despite not being exhaustive, these dimensions cover the most important employment-related aspects where the literature has identified institutional disadvantages among atypical workers.

A further important dimension where scholars have identified an insider-outsider divide is political representation (e.g. Rueda, 2007; Häusermann and Schwander, 2012; Lindvall and Rueda, 2013; Marx, 2015). However, for the purposes of this thesis, the political representation dimension is not investigated. The reasons are manifold. Firstly, for the majority of workers, in both standard and atypical employment, political participation might not be regarded as a central aspect of their employment-related experience. Secondly, only a small minority of workers can be said to be involved in political activities other than voting, which would result in the analysis of political participation either relying on a very small sample within the larger sample of interviewees, or having to concentrate the analysis on a sample of politically active individuals, which is likely to bias the analysis in the other dimensions. Finally, the analysis of political representation would have switched the focus of the research to parties and/or social movements involved in the representation of atypical workers' interests, which is beyond the scope of this thesis.

The following three sub-sections review the current literature on institutional divides between standard and atypical workers across different countries, with particular reference to the already highlighted distinction between Continental (and especially Southern) European and Liberal countries. As already mentioned, there are two comparisons involved. The first is that between standard and atypical workers within one labour market, and the other is between countries.

2.6.1 Disadvantage in Employment

As already highlighted in section 2.2, according to scholars in the dualism literature, there appears to be a clear distinction between the path toward liberalisation chosen by Anglo-Saxon and by Continental European countries and its consequences for employment segmentation (Esping-Andersen and Regini, 2001; Barbieri, 2009). While Anglo-Saxon countries have opted for a thorough liberalisation (Deakin and Reed, 2001; Thelen, 2014), most Continental European countries have allowed only a partial flexibilisation, generally deregulating atypical contracts but with little modification of employment protection for standard employment (Boeri and Garibaldi, 2007; Barbieri and Scherer, 2009; Bentolila et al., 2012). Within this comparative framework, Southern European countries are argued to be an extreme case within Continental European countries, as they are the ones where the gap in employment protection is highest (Barbieri, 2009; Rueda et al, 2015).

In this context, the divide in employment protection is what constitutes dualism, as the workforce is divided between those in relatively secure standard employment and those in atypical employment who enjoy more limited employment protection. Thus, according to these theories, there exists what may be argued to be an employment protection divide dependent on the relative employment protection granted to standard employment vis-à-vis atypical employment. This employment protection divide is argued to be larger in countries which have followed only a partial liberalisation of their labour market and which still grant comparatively high employment protection to standard workers, such as the Southern European countries. By contrast, countries which grant low employment protection to all workers, such as the Liberal countries, are argued to present a more limited employment protection divide.

In translating this institutional divide into individual disadvantage, we can hypothesise atypical workers to perceive their employment status as relatively more insecure in Southern European compared to Liberal countries, as they experience a larger employment protection gap in relation to standard workers. Hence, referring to the concept of precariousness, we expect atypical workers in Southern Europe to experience a higher sense of employment precariousness compared to their counterparts in Liberal countries. Reversely, standard employment is expected to be perceived as more secure in Southern Europe compared to Liberal countries, as it is granted higher employment protection in the former compared to the latter.

Furthermore, other authors have suggested a more dynamic perspective on dualism, considering employment transitions rather than employment statuses (see, for example,

Barbieri and Scherer, 2009; Berton et al., 2011; Muffels, 2015). For example, Muffels (2015) argues that we cannot really talk about dualisation if ‘outsiders’ are able to easily become ‘insiders’, especially within a short time span. Thus, the ability to easily move from atypical to standard employment would suggest that the labour market is not dualised and that it guarantees fluidity between employment categories. Therefore, if atypical employment is a path out of unemployment and it subsequently leads to standard employment, it can then be regarded as a ‘stepping stone’. By contrast, if people in atypical employment are ‘stuck’ in this form of employment and they are unable to progress towards standard jobs, then atypical can be regarded as a ‘trap’ (Barbieri and Scherer, 2009; Origo and Lodovici, 2012).

The type of use of atypical contracts made by employers is a relevant endogenous variable influencing the possibility of transition. If employers hire atypical workers mostly to reduce costs compared to hiring standard workers, or to make up for a temporary shortage of labour force, it is likely that transition into standard employment will not be frequent (Hevenstone, 2010; Gebel and Giesecke, 2011). If, on the contrary, they use atypical employment as a ‘screening device’ for new employees before eventually hiring those most suitable, then atypical employment may be considered a stepping stone, at least for some (Forde and Slater, 2005). It has been argued that the use employers make of atypical employment is strongly influenced by the employment regulation framework and this translates into differences between countries in the possibility of transition (e.g. Mitlacher, 2007; Leschke, 2009; Muffels, 2015). Overall, studies have found that in Southern European countries, atypical employment is mostly used as a substitute for standard one, translating into a trap effect for atypical workers, who have limited opportunities to become permanent (e.g. Güell and Petrongolo, 2007; Barbieri and Scherer, 2009). By contrast, in Liberal countries, but also in Scandinavian countries, transitions into permanent employment appear comparatively easier (e.g. Booth et al., 2002; Muffels and Luijkx, 2008; Leschke, 2009; Jahn and Rosholm, 2013). Continental European other than Southern European countries, are placed in between, though somewhat closer to the Southern European countries (e.g. Blanchard and Landier, 2002; Debels, 2005; Kwasnicka, 2005; Muffels and Luijkx, 2008; Leschke, 2009; Biegert, 2014).

Hence, there appears to be a significant amount of overlap between countries with large differences in employment protection between standard and atypical jobs and ‘trap’ effects for those in non-standard employment, such as Continental and especially Southern European countries. This has been attributed to the fact that employers in these countries use atypical employment as a cost reduction strategy and in order to avoid regulations concerning standard employment (Güell and Petrongolo, 2007; Barbieri and Scherer, 2009). By contrast, countries

with relatively minor differences in employment protection between standard and atypical workers, such as the Anglo-Saxon and some of the Scandinavian countries, seem to offer better prospects of transition into standard employment for those in atypical employment. This has been argued to be due to the fact that, contrary to Continental European countries, employers in those countries might use atypical employment primarily to increase their functional flexibility or as a ‘screening device’ for future permanent hiring (Booth et al., 2002; Jahn and Rosholm, 2013). Hence, atypical workers in Southern Europe are expected to experience more difficulties in moving to standard employment and to experience more prolonged experiences in atypical employment. Relating to the concept of precariousness, we can hypothesise the employment experience of atypical workers in Southern Europe to be more precarious dynamically than that of atypical workers in Liberal countries. We expect atypical workers to feel more trapped in atypical employment and to perceive their employment prospects as more insecure in the former than in the latter.

Furthermore, other scholars argue that a different type of transition is also important, namely that from unemployment to atypical employment (Gray, 2002; Gash, 2005; Scherer, 2005). Atypical employment might offer an opportunity for the unemployed to re-enter the labour market. In that respect, it can be interpreted as a way of reducing the divide with those in standard employment, providing a stepping stone out of unemployment. There is not much theoretical literature on how different labour market institutions can play a role in influencing transitions from unemployment to atypical employment, while the empirical literature focuses mostly on single-country studies (e.g. Scherer, 2005; Addison and Surfield, 2006). As no clear evidence for differences in a stepping stone effect could be identified in a cross-country comparison, I formulate the hypothesis that no systematic differences in the transition from unemployment to temporary employment exist between Liberal and Southern European countries.

2.6.2 Disadvantage in Work

Working conditions are among the most prominent dimensions in which atypical workers have been found to be presented with a disadvantage compared to their standard counterparts, including pay, health and safety, working time, job content, training and relations with colleagues. Since their first formulations in the 1970s, dualist theories have argued for the existence of a segment of the workforce experiencing comparatively worse working conditions (Doeringer and Piore, 1971; Reich et al., 1973; Rubery, 1978). Part of the definition of being

an ‘outsider’ included being subjected to lower pay, more menial tasks, less training and fewer opportunities for unionisation (Doeringer and Piore, 1971; Rubery, 1978).

In the following years, the spread of atypical forms of employment has fostered numerous empirical studies comparing the working conditions of atypical workers vis-à-vis standard workers (e.g. Feldman et al., 1994; Rogers, 1995; Letourneux, 1998; Goudswaard and de Nanteuil, 2000; Guest, 2004; De Graaf-Zijl, 2005). These studies mostly confirmed initial expectations from the dualism literature, showing atypical workers to be at a disadvantage with regard to a number of working conditions. For instance, Letourneux (1998) found atypical workers in the European Union to be worse off compared to their standard counterparts with regard to several working conditions, including pay, job content and relation with colleagues, though they were not systematically at a disadvantage in terms of working time. Goudswaard and de Nanteuil (2000), in a cross-country comparison of seven major European countries, found atypical workers to be at a disadvantage in many working conditions, including health and safety and working time. The study also highlighted many similarities between countries, regardless of their employment and welfare regime.

The increasing political awareness of the divide in working conditions between standard and atypical workers and the growing pressure from trade unions prompted many advancements in national legislations to promote equal treatment (Benassi and Vlandas, 2015; Pulignano et al., 2015). For instance, in some countries, such as Italy, the introduction of some atypical employment contracts was immediately accompanied by the provision of equal treatment in several working conditions, guaranteed by both national legislation and collective agreements (Voss et al., 2013; Durazzi, 2015). In others, such as Belgium and Germany, equal treatment was reached subsequently through negotiations with trade unions, though equal treatment depended on the coverage of collective bargaining (Pulignano and Doerflinger, 2013; Benassi and Dorigatti, 2015).

Finally, the European Union, in subsequent attempts to harmonise workers’ rights across Europe, has issued several Directives promoting equal treatment for non-standard workers, including the Part-Time Work Directive (1997/81/EC), the Fixed-term Work Directive (1999/70/EC) and the Temporary Agency Work Directive (2008/104/EC). The implementation of EU-level legislation helped equalise the working conditions of many atypical workers with those of standard employees, especially in countries with a traditionally deregulated employment framework, like the UK, where many atypical workers were still not guaranteed equal treatment. Nevertheless, a number of authors have claimed that several derogations from the principle of equal treatment are provided in those Directives, especially

in the most recent Temporary Agency Work Directive, somewhat diluting equal treatment provisions concerning a number of working conditions (Vosko, 2009; Wynn, 2014). Overall, it can be said that, currently, the majority of atypical workers¹ across Europe have access to equal treatment in most working conditions, with some exceptions². Therefore, no institutional divide in working conditions between standard and atypical workers should be present where equal treatment is guaranteed.

Nevertheless, some scholars in the precariousness literature have found atypical workers to present some disadvantages in working conditions compared to standard employees (e.g. Rogers, 1995; Von Hippel, 2006; Altieri et al., 2009). For instance, Rogers (1995), argued that atypical workers experience several disadvantages in relations with colleagues and supervisors, being subjected to discrimination. Similarly, Altieri et al. (2009), studying TA workers in Italy, found them to be generally assigned the most menial jobs and to be moved from one task to another within the same assignment, with little continuity, unlike their standard colleagues. This shows that precariousness scholars pay more attention to disadvantages which are not necessarily caused by work regulations, but are instead dependent on practices in the workplaces. Thus, we might expect some forms of disadvantage to be present, although no clear difference could be identified between Liberal and Southern European countries.

Furthermore, it has been argued that atypical workers tend to be disproportionally employed in occupations with bad working conditions (Kalleberg, 2000; Keune, 2015). These might include occupations with lower pay, fewer fringe benefits, requiring lower skills and being at a higher health risk (Kalleberg, 2013). Nevertheless, this aspect goes beyond the conception of dualism hitherto used, as the differences in working conditions are due to compositional effects within the workforce rather than institutional factors. However, the correlation between atypical employment and bad working conditions has been used by several scholars in the precariousness literature to argue an increasing polarisation of the workforce (see for instance, Standing, 2011; Kalleberg, 2013), between those with good employment and working conditions, and those without. Once again, this shows the attention paid by the precariousness literature to absolute disadvantages, even where no relative disadvantage is present.

When it comes to individual representation and individual bargaining power, the dualism literature is mostly silent. Although some early dualist scholars, mostly from radical theory,

¹ Though this is still not the case for self-employed and quasi-self-employed workers, and for a small number of specific atypical contracts in some countries.

² The derogation from the principle of equal treatment in Italy and the UK are discussed in detail in section 4.5.

have highlighted the more limited bargaining power ‘outsiders’ have, and how this is used by employers as a form of control (Reich et al. 1973), the more recent literature on dualism has mostly ignored the issue. Nevertheless, we can rely on insights from the precariousness literature to formulate some tentative hypotheses. Although most authors within the precariousness literature have also been silent on the issue, a few have highlighted the limited bargaining power atypical workers have in negotiating conditions at the workplace and how this is used by employers as a disciplinary mechanism (e.g. Catania et al., 2004; McKay and Markova, 2010; Pedaci, 2010). For instance, Pedaci (2010) argues that atypical workers, because of the risk of non-renewal of the employment contract, feel more obliged to fulfil the employers’ demands and not to voice their problems, encouraging employers to use atypical contracts to control the workforce. Therefore, we may hypothesise that atypical workers experience more limited bargaining power than standard workers when it comes to individual representation. Nevertheless, the lack of comparative studies on the topic makes it difficult to formulate hypotheses from a cross-country perspective.

With respect to workers’ collective representation, the dualism literature has traditionally highlighted an insider-outsider divide between standard and atypical workers, with standard workers represented by unions and atypical workers excluded from collective representation (Lindbeck and Snower, 1988; Rueda, 2007; Palier and Thelen, 2010). This has been confirmed by empirical data, showing unionisation rates among atypical workers to be much lower than those of standard employees (Pedersini, 2010; Vandaele and Leschke, 2010). Furthermore, dualist scholars have highlighted how unions have contributed actively in creating a divide in employment and working conditions, by protecting and fostering the interests of their constituency, made up mainly of standard workers, at the expense of non-standard workers (Lindbeck and Snower, 2001; Burgess et al., 2013).

Unions’ attitudes towards atypical workers have been seen as somewhat ambivalent. On the one hand, unions have perceived them as a threat to the employment and working conditions of core workers. On the other hand, they have seen the use of atypical employment by employers as a way to protect standard workers (Heery, 2004). Overall, union strategies have been argued to exclude atypical workers, by only representing the interests of standard workers. Representing atypical workers was seen by unions as legitimising these new forms of employment to which they were in principle against (Gumbrell-McCormick, 2011). However, they refused to represent atypical workers but tacitly encouraged their use to shelter standard workers from a decline in employment and working conditions (Olsen, 2005; Palier and Thelen, 2010). Furthermore, unions did not want to devote time and resources to represent

atypical workers in a time when resources were already limited for the representation of standard workers. Similarly, the dispersion of atypical workers and the temporary nature of their employment makes their recruitment and retainment difficult, further discouraging union representation (Gumbrell-McCormick, 2011).

Given that unions have been seen in the dualism literature as a tool to protect the interests of ‘insiders’, union power has been argued to be associated to an insider-outsider divide, with countries with traditionally stronger unions, such as in Continental Europe, being more dualised than in countries with low union power, such as in the Liberal countries (Rueda, 2005; Palier and Thelen, 2010). An exception is the Scandinavian countries, where the high union density also among atypical workers has meant that unions have considered them part of their constituency, while the comparatively low employment protection gap between standard and atypical workers has meant that unions have been more inclined to adopt pro-outsider strategies (Rueda, 2007; Benassi and Vlandas, 2015). Therefore, if we are to translate these divides into individual disadvantages, we can hypothesise atypical workers in Southern European countries to feel more excluded from collective representation than atypical workers in Liberal countries, given that union power is stronger and collective bargaining more encompassing in the former than in the latter.

Nevertheless, the so-called revitalisation literature has highlighted different attitudes trade unions have developed towards atypical workers (e.g. Heery, 2004; Benassi and Vlandas, 2015).). Although acknowledging exclusion of atypical workers as a possible union strategy, they also stress how some unions have also implemented more inclusive strategies. For instance, Heery and Abbott (2000) and Heery (2004), investigating union strategies for TAW in the UK, show different kinds of response: from total refusal to represent TA workers and legitimate TAW to full engagement to representing TA workers and attempting to regulate TAW. Other authors find a similar range of union strategies in other countries (see, for instance, Cerviño, 2000; MacKenzie, 2009; Pulignano and Doerflinger, 2013). Many scholars within this literature have argued an evolution of union strategies overtime, highlighting how unions have moved from a strategy of total exclusion, to a gradual inclusion of atypical workers (Gumbrell-McCormick, 2011; Mitlacher et al., 2014; Benassi and Dorigatti, 2015). These studies show how the initial strategy of exclusion has become a less viable option over time, as unions have increasingly recognised flexibility as a necessity of contemporary labour markets and therefore atypical employment as a legitimate form of employment. At the same time, the growing number of atypical workers has made it necessary for unions to represent an increasing share of the workforce (Gumbrell-McCormick, 2011; Benassi and Vlandas, 2015).

Thus, contrary to authors in the dualism literature, who see unions representing standard workers at the expense of atypical workers, scholars in the revitalisation literature see unions as also representing the interests of atypical workers, and as a tool to improve their employment and working conditions.

Nevertheless, some scholars in the revitalisation literature have highlighted how union strategies towards atypical workers can be conceived in terms of partial or selective inclusion (Cerviño, 2000; Durazzi, 2015). On the one hand, unions have aimed at improving the atypical workers' conditions both because they want to represent these workers' interests but also because an erosion in working conditions is perceived as a threat to standard workers (Mitlacher et al., 2014; Benassi and Dorigatti, 2015). On the other hand, whenever a divergence of interests between standard and atypical workers has materialised, unions have tended to protect their core constituency of standard workers (Cerviño, 2000; Durazzi, 2015). Thus, these authors argue that only when the interests of standard and atypical workers are not diverging, the interests of atypical workers are represented.

Overall, the revitalisation literature offers a more positive picture of the role of unions in shaping the divide between standard and atypical workers. In more recent years, union strategies have been seen as increasingly more inclusive, contributing in improving atypical workers' employment and working conditions. In that respect, it can be argued that in countries with higher collective bargaining power, such as those in Continental and the Southern Europe, atypical workers are better represented than in countries with low collective bargaining power, such as the Liberal countries. Nevertheless, it may also be argued that this might hold only for as long as their interests are not in conflict with those of standard employees. Therefore, we can formulate an alternative hypothesis for the experience of collective representation of atypical workers: atypical workers will feel better represented in Southern European than in Liberal countries, as long as their interests do not diverge from those of standard workers.

2.6.3 Disadvantage in Income Protection

Income protection has been argued to be one of the core dimensions within which the process of dualisation has been unfolding (Davidsson and Naczyk, 2009). Welfare institutions have been primarily held responsible for providing workers in atypical jobs with differentiated income protection compared to regular workers, as rules for eligibility, entitlement and coverage *de facto* exclude those workers from income protection reserved for workers in regular employment both when in work and in periods of non-employment (Berton et al.,

2012). In this context, social security institutions, both public and private, are regarded as the primary factor in producing an insider-outsider divide, as they have been structured to provide differential access to income protection to different categories of workers, contributing to enlarging an already existing labour market divide or even in creating new ones (Palier and Thelen, 2010; Seleeib-Kaiser et al., 2011; Emmenegger et al., 2012; Obinger et al., 2012; Peng, 2012).

Bismarckian welfare systems, which have historically linked income protection to the work position, are said to be the most dualised (Palier and Martin, 2007). As they have relied heavily on contribution-based benefits designed for full-time permanent workers in the period after World War II, Bismarckian systems are argued to strongly discriminate against workers with non-standard jobs. These workers are less likely to be able to meet the necessary eligibility criteria to have access to social insurance schemes, and they are consequently more likely to rely on social assistance and other means-tested benefits for income protection (Palier and Thelen, 2012). Palier and Thelen (2010; 2012) argue that institutional changes in Bismarckian systems of social protection have been mainly meant to preserve the income protection already provided to ‘core’ workers, while at the same they have developed a second-best, mainly means-tested system of income protection for workers at the margin, who are not able to meet the necessary eligibility criteria to access contributory-based benefits but who can at least have access to some form of more basic income protection. Contribution-based social protection systems are said to grant relatively generous, generally earnings-related income protection to the ‘insiders’, meant to preserve their living standard even when not in work, but only limited flat-rate income protection to the ‘outsiders’, who are only prevented from falling into absolute poverty (Seleeib-Kaiser, 2002).

Moreover, even when those in atypical employment are eligible for contribution-based benefits, the amount received is generally lower than for standard workers, given that benefit generosity is often tied to the amount of contributions paid (Palier and Thelen, 2010; Berton et al., 2012). For instance, Berton et al. (2012), in analysing inclusiveness of several public social protection schemes, including unemployment benefits, maternity allowances, sickness benefits and pensions in several countries characterised by contributory social protection systems, find that in all countries, despite some differences, workers in temporary and other forms of atypical employment receive less compared to standard workers. Within this context, Southern European countries have once again been argued to constitute an extreme group within the Continental cluster, providing even lower protection for those on low means, and sometimes lacking a proper safety net of last resort through social assistance schemes (Jessoula

et al., 2010; Sacchi, 2011). Jessoula et al. (2010) introduce the concept of ‘mid-siders’, which includes both atypical workers and those working in micro and small firms. Focusing their analysis on the Italian labour market, they argue that, in Southern Europe, a significant proportion of the workforce is irregular while inactivity rates are comparatively high, making a significant percentage of the working-age population completely excluded from social protection, constituting the ‘outsiders’. By contrast, atypical workers generally have access to at least some form of social protection, albeit less generous and encompassing than that for standard workers in medium and large firms, who constitute the ‘insiders’.

By contrast, Liberal systems, where access to benefits has historically been aimed at needs satisfaction rather than preservation of the acquired living standard, provide minimal income protection for those below a certain income threshold, leaving the provision of more generous insurance schemes to the market (Emmenegger et al., 2012). As access to benefits is generally means-tested and contribution-based schemes are generally meant to complement rather than substitute means-tested benefits, they are argued to discriminate less against people with different work histories or previously different employment statuses, thus leading to a more limited insider-outsider divide in income protection. Nevertheless, if we are to consider the strong reliance on the market to complement the minimal public income protection, another picture might emerge (Seeleib-Kaiser, 2012). The importance of private and occupational income protection schemes in Liberal countries has been argued to also create a divide, as access to those benefits depends on the employment status of the worker and on the contributions paid into those schemes (e.g. Kalleberg et al., 2000; Seeleib-Kaiser et al., 2011; Yoon and Chung, 2016). Specifically, when it comes to atypical employment, Kalleberg et al. (2000) argue that, when considering the important role that occupational (private) schemes play in Liberal systems, workers in non-standard employment are at a disadvantage compared to standard workers, as they tend to have more limited access to a range of occupational fringe benefits, including health and pension insurance. Similarly, Seeleib-Kaiser et al. (2012) argue that the limited access to occupational welfare protection certain non-standard workers have in Liberal regimes might foster dualism.

Hence, there appears to be a clear distinction between Liberal and Southern European countries in the provision of public income protection and its consequences for divides in income protection. These findings allow the formation of an initial hypothesis as regards dualism in public income protection: atypical workers in Southern European countries experience a more wide-spread income protection disadvantage compared to atypical workers in Liberal countries with regard to public social protection. They are expected to find public

social protection schemes more exclusionary, as they experience more difficulties in accessing them. At the same time, they do not have access to a safety net of last resort, at least in those Southern European countries which still do not provide a minimum income scheme. Using concepts borrowed from the precariousness literature, we can expect atypical workers in Southern Europe to experience a higher income insecurity compared to their counterparts in Liberal countries and to feel more vulnerable to income losses in cases of non-employment. Nevertheless, if we consider also private income protection, the picture appears more complex. Given the stronger reliance on occupational benefits for social risks such as sickness or retirement in Liberal countries, we might expect atypical workers to feel more excluded in sickness and retirement protection in those countries compared to workers in Southern Europe. On the contrary, the limited availability to all workers of occupational schemes as regards the risk of unemployment, may be hypothesised to make atypical workers in Liberal countries feel more included, as they have more equal access to unemployment protection.

Finally, in discussing income protection, it is important to take into consideration private sources of income protection, such as the family or formal credit, which are not related to individual employment. The literature on dualism has been mostly silent about the role of these forms of income protection in shaping insider-outsider divides, as they have been regarded as external to the labour market and therefore not directly involved in any employment-related divide. Therefore, it is difficult to formulate any hypothesis to investigate in the empirical analysis with respect to these sources of income protection. Nevertheless, the precariousness literature reminds us how the broader socio-economic context and individual situations may contribute to shaping disadvantages in the labour market. Thus, disadvantages in aspects external to the labour market may also shape disadvantages in the labour market and vice versa. In Southern European countries, which are characterised by a familialistic welfare system (Ferrera, 1996; Moreno, 2006; Naldini and Guerrero Jurado, 2009), authors studying precariousness have found the family to provide generous and encompassing income protection for atypical workers (Fullin, 2004; Bertolini, 2009). By contrast, Liberal countries have traditionally relied on the market for the provision of income protection and the family is thought to play a more limited income protection role (Esping-Andersen, 1990; Rhodes, 1996). Therefore, we can hypothesise atypical workers in Southern Europe to experience the family as a more important source of income protection compared to their counterparts in Liberal countries.

When it comes to other private sources of income protection, such as formal credit, no clear distinction between countries could be identified. Both the literature on dualism and the

literature on precariousness have mostly ignored access to forms of income protection separate from employment. However, a few scholars in the precariousness literature have highlighted the difficulties atypical workers might experience in accessing formal credit (see, for instance, Altieri et al., 2009), because of their unreliable income prospects. No clear cross-country difference could be found. Thus, we expect atypical workers in both Southern and Liberal countries to experience similar disadvantages in accessing income protection through the formal credit system compared to standard workers.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed the literature addressing the influence of institutions on atypical workers' disadvantages. Authors in the literature on dualism have explored in detail the characteristics of different institutional settings and the divides they have engendered in access to rights and entitlements between workers with different employment statuses. Thus, they have provided a useful framework for the analysis of the impact of different institutional arrangements on atypical workers' disadvantages. The review of this literature has allowed the identification of several dimensions in which an institutional divide exists between atypical workers and standard workers and of the institutional characteristics responsible for those divides. In this context, this literature has also provided a classification of countries based on the types of divide they have shaped in the labour market, depending on the different configurations of labour market, political and welfare institutions. Therefore, the dualism literature may constitute a relevant backdrop for starting to investigate the influence of institutions on atypical workers' disadvantages from a comparative perspective. This literature has informed the dimensions in which I focus my exploration of how institutional divides translate into individual disadvantages.

Nevertheless, I have emphasised the fact that these authors have the limitation of using a top-down perspective, adopting a deterministic approach in considering the impact of institutions on individual divides. Disadvantages have been conceptualised mainly in terms of the lack of rights and entitlements without exploring empirically how these affect individual situations. I have argued that the literature on precariousness provides a bottom-up approach, focused on the individual and on her interactions with the institutional framework and more broadly with the socio-economic environment. This approach is better suited for the analysis of disadvantages from an individual perspective, allowing for more complex causal connections to be uncovered and for heterogeneity of influences on individuals to be investigated. Thus, I have also drawn from the precariousness literature for the analysis of disadvantages at the

individual level, using insights from this literature to capture the nuances of individual stories, the subjective perception of these disadvantages and to better account for cumulative and interactive effects between several factors.

This chapter has also set out the analytical framework for the empirical analysis. The dimensions in which I have organised the empirical investigation represent the three core employment-related dimensions within which the literature on dualism has identified clear institutional divides between standard and atypical workers. Within each dimension, a clear distinction has been established between Liberal and Southern European countries, as different institutional divides have been shaped given their respective institutional settings. In particular, Southern European countries have been argued in the dualism literature to be the most dualised in the European context within all dimensions by providing a comparatively high employment protection gap, more limited opportunities for employment transitions, a higher collective representation divide and a more discriminatory system of public social protection. By contrast, Liberal countries have been regarded among the least dualised given the low employment protection for both standard and atypical workers, the greater opportunities for transition, more limited bargaining power of unions and a predominantly income-based system of public social protection, although with a potentially dualising system of occupational income protection.

The differences between the institutional characteristics of these two groups of countries has allowed the development of a number of initial hypotheses on the types of disadvantages experienced by atypical workers in these different institutional contexts. These hypotheses have guided the empirical investigation, in order to explore whether the institutional divides identified in the literature have translated into individual disadvantages, and whether other factors may have contributed in shaping those disadvantages. Moreover, hypotheses from the dualism literature have been complemented by hypotheses from other streams of literature. Nevertheless, before going into the empirical investigation, chapter 4 will provide a detailed description of the institutional framework in the two countries chosen for the comparative analysis. Where necessary, initial hypotheses are modified or refined to take into account specific institutional configurations.

3. Research Design

3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the research design of the thesis. First, section 3.2 explains the reasons for choosing a comparative approach for the analysis of individual disadvantages of atypical workers. I will show that a comparative design is necessary to analyse the impact of institutions on the experienced divides, as this allows us to investigate how different institutional configurations impact on the workers' experience. This is followed by a presentation of the two countries selected as comparative case studies: Italy and the UK.

Section 3.3 is devoted to the explanation of the focus on TAW as a valid example of atypical employment. I show that in both countries a number of atypical employment contracts are in use, but most of them are not directly comparable, because their characteristics are idiosyncratic to the country regulations. Instead, TAW present similar characteristics in both countries, allowing for an accurate comparison. Besides, it has been one of the fastest growing forms of atypical employment and it has been at the centre of many employment flexibility debates, making it a representative form of atypical employment in these and in other European countries. Section 3.4 summarises the main employment-related dimensions in which the literature has identified an institutional divide and how they are operationalised in this research. Section 3.5 and 3.6 explain the methodology used in the selection of the interviewees and in the data collection and analysis. I will argue that semi-structured interviews are the most suitable empirical method to investigate individually experienced disadvantage and I will provide adequate justification for this choice, also highlighting the main limitations. Section 3.7 discusses the ethical concerns of this research strategy and the measures adopted to deal with the ethical issues considered.

3.2 Comparative Framework

Despite a wide interest in the social sciences in the emergence and spread of atypical employment in post-industrial economies, there have been surprisingly few qualitative studies which used a comparative approach to investigate the disadvantages experienced by atypical workers. This is unfortunate, as the strengths of qualitative comparative research have long been highlighted in the social science literature (e.g. Prezworski and Teune, 1970; Skocpol and Somers 1980, Ragin, 1987; Rose, 1991; Lim 2010).

The qualitative studies which have adopted a comparative perspective come mostly from the dualism literature (e.g. Barbieri, 2009; Palier and Thelen, 2010) and, as already explained in chapter 2, section 2.4, they have mostly entailed an analysis of the institutional framework, refraining from exploring disadvantages at the individual level. Within the precariousness literature, qualitative comparative studies have mostly concentrated on finding a suitable definition of 'precariousness' which could travel different institutional contexts (Vosko et al., 2003; Laparra et al., 2004; Barbieri, 2011), rather than investigating the experience of precariousness among atypical workers in different institutional settings. They have thus provided limited insights on the differences and similarities of the disadvantages experienced by atypical workers in different countries and how these can be attributed to institutional variables. Therefore, to my knowledge, there is a lack of comparative qualitative studies exploring the impact of different institutional arrangements on the experienced disadvantages of atypical workers. The studies which have provided an in-depth qualitative account of the disadvantages experienced by temporary agency workers (e.g. Rogers, 1995; Altieri et al., 2009) or, more generally, by atypical workers (e.g. Fullin, 2004, Armano, 2010; Schildrick et al., 2012), tend to be single-country studies. Although these studies have the merit of highlighting a range of disadvantages experienced by atypical workers, they did not provide an adequate explanation of the role institutional arrangements had in shaping them.

I argue that if we are to understand the impact of institutions on the disadvantages experienced by atypical workers, a single-country study cannot disentangle the relative importance of institutional configurations on the disadvantages experienced by these workers or the varied impact different combinations of institutions produce. Therefore, single-country studies have been unable to draw, if only tentative, connections between institutional configurations and the individual experience. By contrast, a comparative study allows us to draw a connection between institutional factors and experienced disadvantages, by comparing similarities and differences in outcomes among countries with different institutional frameworks. Hence, only by comparing the disadvantages experienced by TA workers in two different employment, work and social protection contexts, are we able to disentangle the role these institutions play in shaping those disadvantages.

Nevertheless, the limitation of a two-country comparison is that the characteristics of the institutions and the institutions themselves greatly outnumber the investigated cases (Ragin, 1987). This is a common limitation of many qualitative comparative studies which investigate complex phenomena involving a high number of variables but on a limited sample of cases. Nonetheless, the depth of analysis which is possible through the use of qualitative methods

can counteract the small-n problem (Bryman, 2004). Hence, although the comparison should ideally involve as many combinations of institutional arrangements as possible, the opportunity of studying the disadvantages experienced by atypical workers in depth and their connection to the institutional setting has reduced the comparison to only two cases.

The selection of case studies has been done in order to do what Skocpol and Somers (1980) defined as comparison as ‘contrast of contexts’ (p.178). This type of comparison is contrasted by the authors with comparison as the parallel demonstration of theory and comparison as macro-causal analysis. The former is used in order to demonstrate the validity of a theory across case studies, while the latter is used to derive macro-causal inferences over a specific social structure or process. The comparison by contrast of contexts is instead interested in highlighting the unique characteristics of each case and to show how these unique characteristics affect the phenomenon of study (*ibidem*).

This type of comparison entails cases where a certain social phenomenon is contrasted in different contextual settings in order to investigate the impact of different contexts on the selected phenomenon. In this study, the phenomenon of interest is the disadvantages experienced by TA workers and the context refers to the institutional setting in which TAW is embedded in Italy and the UK. The comparison is meant to highlight whether and how the specificities of each country’s institutional framework translate into differently experienced disadvantages. The importance of comparing different rather than similar cases is that only by analysing the outcome in different institutional configurations, within an otherwise similar context (see section 3.2.1 and section 3.6, on the opportunities and limitations of establishing similarities in other contextual factors in the two cases), are we able to attribute differences in disadvantages to institutional factors. Should we consider countries with similar institutional settings as regards TAW, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to trace similarities and differences in disadvantages back to the institutional framework.

As is argued in the following section, these two countries present important contextual similarities, but also significant differences as regards the institutional framework when it comes to atypical employment. These two different ‘contexts’ have been argued by authors from the dualism literature to have produced different types of divides between atypical and standard workers and this claim is explored in the empirical analysis. Through this study, systematic similarities and differences between the experienced disadvantages of being a TA worker in Italy and the UK are uncovered. The study tries to investigate how these patterns of similarities and differences can be explained by the different configurations of institutions in

place and by the variation in the characteristics of the institutions in the two countries of analysis.

3.2.1 Case Selection

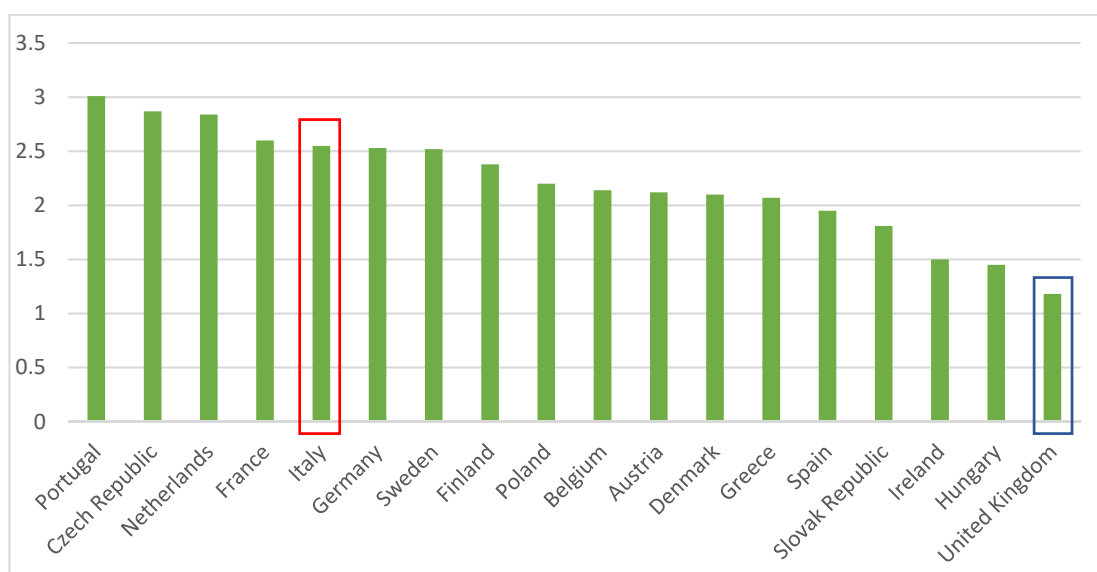
This section explains and justifies the reasons behind the case selection. As I argue, the UK and Italy can be regarded as different cases in the European context as regards their institutional framework when it comes atypical employment. These characteristics place the two countries in two contrasting groups of countries according to the dualism literature, the Liberal and the Southern European respectively.

Firstly, Italy and the UK present many similarities as regards their socio-economic characteristics. The two countries have a similar population size, over 60 million, and a roughly comparable GDP per capita at PPP³ (World Bank, 2015; IMF, 2016). They can both be regarded as developed economies and have a long tradition of welfare policies in place. Despite these similarities, they also present significant institutional differences in a range of institutional realms related to atypical employment.

As already highlighted in the previous chapter (see section 2.6.1), the two countries have followed two distinct paths in labour market liberalisation. The UK has adopted a Liberal approach, deregulating the labour market thoroughly for all employment categories (Deakin and Reed, 2001; Koslowski and McLean, 2015). This means that both standard and atypical workers have comparatively low employment protection. By contrast, Italy started to deregulate its labour market late by comparison and, similarly to other Continental European countries, it has followed a liberalisation ‘at the margin’ (Boeri and Garibaldi, 2007), partially deregulating atypical forms of employment, but preserving employment protection for standard workers (Barbieri and Sestito, 2012; Checchi and Leonardi, 2016). To illustrate the difference, we can consider the EPL index for permanent workers, which can give us an idea on where to place the two countries in comparative terms. While the UK is the EU country with the lowest EPL for permanent workers (EPL of 1.18), Italy is among the highest (EPL of 2.55) together with other Continental European countries (see Figure 1).

³ \$41459 in the UK and \$36030 in Italy (World Bank, 2015).

Figure 1. EPL index for individual dismissal of permanent employees for selected⁴ EU countries, 2013



Source: OECD, 2016

The two countries also have a different reliance on temporary workers by employers (4.8% of all employees are temporary in the UK and 10.2% in Italy, EUROSTAT, 2017c) and a different degree of regulation of temporary employment, being deregulated in the UK (EPL⁵ of 0.54) but highly regulated in Italy (2.71) (OECD, 2013c).

In the UK, hiring and firing procedures for both standard and atypical workers are comparatively very loose. The hiring legislation is permissive and there are no limitations in place for the use of specific employment contracts and no justification is needed in the choice of specific employment arrangements (Deakin and Reed, 2001; Koslowski and McLean 2015). These liberal hiring procedures, which might encourage employers to make wide use of atypical contracts, are offset by very loose firing procedures for standard employment contracts. The qualifying period for unfair dismissal is two years and remedies for unfair dismissal are rather weak. Although in principle re-employment might be decided by the

⁴ EU countries with a population of less than 3 million have been excluded, namely: Luxembourg, Malta, Cyprus, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovenia. The most recent accession members have also been excluded: Romania, Bulgaria, Croatia. The inclusion would have only slightly changed the order, with Italy moving to the sixth position (after Latvia) and the UK remaining at the bottom.

⁵ It should be noted that the EPL for temporary employment does not measure actual employment protection but rather regulations applied to temporary forms of employment, including limitations in the use, sector and duration.

tribunal, in practice this happens rarely, and compensations tend to be quite low (Deakin and Reed, 2001). This reduces incentives for employers to use atypical contracts.

The UK is also characterised by a decentralised wage bargaining system with limited coordination and low levels of bargaining coverage. Bargaining coverage is comparatively low at 29.5% in 2013 (OECD, 2015b). Bargaining is thus comparatively fragmented and it happens mostly at the workplace level (Yoon and Chung, 2016). Furthermore, the tax wedge on total labour costs is comparatively low, further reducing wage rigidities (Lodovici, 2001a; OECD, 2017). Finally, reforms in the 1980s and 1990s reduced the ability of trade unions to organise industrial action in defence of employment conditions and union density is comparatively low at 25.4 per cent of the workforce in 2013 (Koslowski and McLean, 2015; OECD, 2015a).

In Italy, employment regulations provide comparatively high protection for standard workers, especially for those employed in medium and large firms. Liberalisation of the Italian labour market happened only in the late 1990s and it was only partial and meant to facilitate the labour market integration of social groups with low labour market attachment, namely women, the young and the long-term unemployed (Barbieri and Scherer, 2009). Hiring and firing procedures for standard employees are very restrictive but hiring procedures are also highly regulated for atypical contracts, providing numerous limitations for the use of atypical contracts in order to prevent abuse by employers. Reforms in the 2000s partly deregulated the use of atypical contracts but they left untouched the employment protection for standard employees (Jessoula et al., 2010; Jessoula and Vesan, 2011). Only the most recent labour reforms of 2012 and 2015 managed to marginally reduce employment protection for standard employees (Fumagalli, 2017). Dismissal regulations for standard workers remain quite stringent and sanctions against unfair dismissals are comparatively severe and widely used. Moreover, the stringency is further heightened by the complexity and lengthiness of juridical procedures and by the uncertainty about the final outcome, given the discretionary power left to labour courts (Lodovici, 2001b). Despite this extremely rigid employment protection framework, employers have been left with some leeway, given that most legislation does not apply to small firms (fewer than 15 employees) and given the important role played by the underground economy, especially in the South (Jessoula et al., 2010).

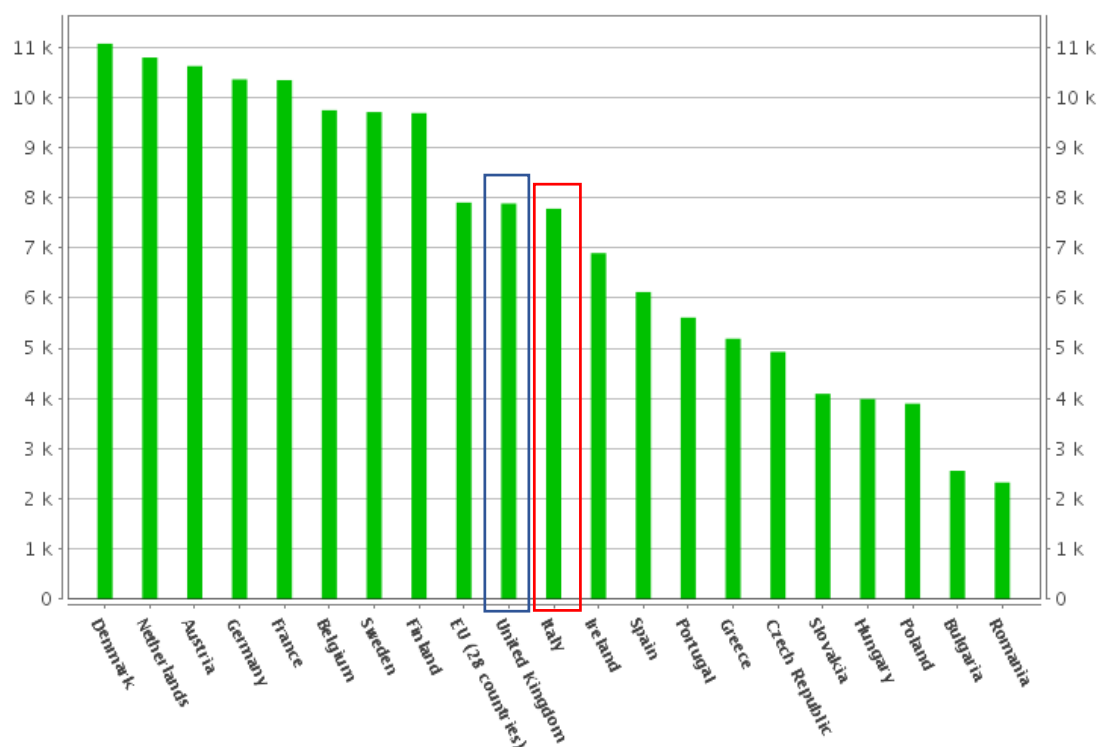
Furthermore, in Italy, employment legislation is meant to provide only a basic regulatory framework, while specific aspects are left to agreements between the social partners. Wage floors and other fundamental employment conditions are decided by national sectoral collective agreements legally binding for all firms in the country (Johnston et al., 2011;

Burroni and Pedaci, 2014). There might be regional and firm-level collective agreements but they can only ameliorate conditions established at the national level (Leonardi, 2009). Moreover, non-wage labour costs are comparatively high, further increasing wage rigidities (Lodovici, 2001a; OECD, 2017). Overall, the social partners play an important role in employment regulations and they have also often been involved in reforms of employment legislation through concertation or consultation with the government (Burroni and Carrieri, 2011; Johnston et al., 2011). Italy also has a comparatively high unionisation rate at 36.9% in 2013, though union membership is concentrated among standard employees in medium and large firms (Leonardi, 2009; OECD, 2015a). Also bargaining coverage is comparatively high at 80.0% in 2013 (OECD, 2015b). Compared to other Continental European countries, trade unions are divided along ideological lines and this has been a defining element of the Italian industrial relations system, which has been historically more contestative than that of Central and Northern European countries (Crouch and Streeck, 1997; Esping-Andersen and Regini, 2001; Leonardi, 2009).

Hence, the UK can be regarded as a deregulated and flexible labour market, making it a prime example of a Liberal regime in the European context, with loose hiring and firing procedures and a limited role for social partners in the regulation of employment. Temporary workers have limited employment protection but so do standard workers. By contrast, Italy epitomises a Southern European country which has followed a deregulation at the margin and which still retains high employment protection for standard workers. In common with other Southern and, more broadly, Continental European countries, many limitations in the use of atypical employment are in place and social partners contribute to the regulation of the employment system. The result of these different labour market frameworks has been argued to be a relatively small divide between standard and atypical workers in the UK and a very large divide in Italy, as already discussed in section 2.6.

We now turn to the description of another category of institutions relevant for the study of institutional divides, namely welfare state institutions. Both Italy and the UK have similar levels of social spending per capita, just slightly lower than the EU average (see Figure 2). Despite this similarity, the structure of their welfare system presents significant differences.

Figure 2. Social spending per capita (PPP) for selected⁶ EU countries, 2014



Source: EUROSTAT (2017d)

The UK has historically been included among the Liberal welfare states, characterised by a mostly Beveridgean welfare system, with a strong reliance on flat-rate means-tested benefits mainly aimed at alleviating poverty. The welfare system strongly relies on private provisions for social protection and it is meant to provide public support only when the individual is unable to achieve adequate protection through private means (Esping-Andersen, 1990; Clasen, 2003; Taylor-Gooby and Larsen, 2004). By contrast, Italy has been classified as a Mediterranean welfare model, with a contribution-based system of social protection⁷ like most Continental European countries, but characterised by a more fragmented system of social protection of last resort compared to other Continental European countries, strongly depending on family and third-sector organisations for the provision of welfare (Ferrera, 1996; Rhodes, 1996; Naldini and Guerrero Jurado, 2009).

When considering only employment-related social protection, differences are even starker. Although both countries may be considered comparatively low spenders in labour market policies (OECD, 2013b), they greatly differ in their spending structure. Since New Labour

⁶ Countries with fewer than 3 million inhabitants and Croatia have been excluded.

⁷ A notable exception is the health care system which, similarly other Southern European countries, is financed through general taxation.

came to power in 1997, the UK has focused on welfare-to-work policies, mostly meant to provide sticks and carrots to workless people through a mixture of incentives to ‘make work pay’, individualised employment services and benefit conditionality (Clasen, 2007; Clegg, 2010). These policies have been pushed further by the Conservative Government since 2010, with a greater emphasis on workfare and more severe sanctioning in the case of benefit recipients’ non-compliance (Deacon and Patrick, 2011; Grimshaw and Rubery, 2012).

Unemployment, disability and sickness benefits are all provided on a flat rate, while a means-tested social assistance benefit and other income-based based benefits are available for people on a low income (GOV.UK, 2015a and 2015b). Only for retirement, is the public flat-rate pension complemented by an earnings-related component (Natali, 2012). Benefit generosity is comparatively low and activation requirements in cases of unemployment, disability or social assistance are tight (OECD, 2013a; Heyes, 2013). Nevertheless, for sickness and pension, state benefits can be complemented by occupational and private schemes, which can be quite generous. Access to these complementary schemes mostly depends on the employer, who might offer more or less generous contractual benefits or none at all (Clasen, 2016). On the one hand, the system can be said to provide similar, though ungenerous, public income protection to all workers, with a strong emphasis on welfare-to-work policies. On the other hand, access to income protection through private schemes is dependent on the employer’s provision.

By contrast, Italy is characterised by an employment-related welfare system mostly based on social insurance where benefit generosity is strongly tied to paid contributions. Moreover, other generous welfare schemes are available for those in standard employment in medium and large firms, especially in the manufacturing sector, where wage guarantee funds often replace normal unemployment benefits (Jessoula and Vesan, 2011). This system, traditionally aimed at providing social protection for the male breadwinner, is ill-equipped to protect atypical workers, who often find themselves unable to meet the necessary contribution requirements to access public benefits or they might not legally be entitled to any (Jessoula et al., 2010). The situation is worsened by the lack of a safety net of last resort for people on low income, given the lack of a means-tested minimum income scheme and patchy and fragmented social assistance policies, left mostly under the competence of local public institutions (Madama, 2010; Graziano and Jessoula, 2011). In this context, the family is considered to play a comparatively important role as a provider of social protection, as it acts mostly as a safety net of first resort, sometimes anticipating welfare needs before they materialise, and leaving

to the State only a subsidiary role (Naldini and Saraceno, 2008; Naldini and Guerrero Jurado, 2009).

Therefore, while the UK can be regarded as a prime example of a Liberal welfare state regime in the European context, Italy epitomises a Mediterranean regime. These two welfare systems have been argued to create different divides in income protection for atypical workers (for a detailed discussion see chapter 2, section 2.6.3). While the UK provides equal access to public income protection for all workers, in Italy income protection strongly depends on the individual's contribution history, which has been stated to disproportionately disadvantage atypical workers. However, in the British system, private schemes, which are largely occupational, play an important role. They may contribute to creating a divide in income protection in the UK, although this divide stems from the employer's provisions rather than from the employment status of the worker.

In conclusion, Italy and the UK can be regarded as polar cases in the European context of different types of employment regulations, industrial relations and income protection systems. The UK has followed a path of far-reaching labour market liberalisation, and nowadays it presents a very flexible labour market with limited employment protection of all workers. Italy represents a country where liberalisation happened only at the margin, with partly deregulated atypical employment but high protection for permanent workers. These two employment frameworks are coupled with two social protection systems which also reflect different income protection approaches. The UK follows liberal features, providing limited but equal protection to all workers, albeit with a potentially dualising role for private schemes. By contrast, Italy features a highly contribution-based social protection system, and only limited protection for those on low means. This thus makes the two countries suitable cases in the European context for exploring hypotheses on whether and how different disadvantages originating in the institutional realm affect the experience of atypical workers in different ways.

3.3 Choice of Employment Contract and Sector

This section discusses the choice of temporary agency work as the type of atypical contract to be investigated empirically in Italy and the UK. The labour law in each country establishes a number of employment contracts other than the full-time permanent contract, of which only some can be regarded as comparable, while others are relatively idiosyncratic. Among the so-called atypical employment contracts, there is relative heterogeneity between the countries. Self-employment is more prevalent in Italy compared to the UK (21.9% and 14.1%

respectively in 2014, EUROSTAT, 2014), as it is in other Mediterranean countries, stemming from the relative prevalence of small and micro-businesses (Matsaganis et al., 2003; Ferrera, 2016).

Other than self-employment, the most important atypical contracts in the UK are: fixed-term, temporary agency work, zero-hour (and guaranteed-hour) (GOV.UK, 2017c). Italy presents a larger variety of atypical contracts, which are sometimes tailored for specific groups or businesses, which include: fixed-term, temporary agency work, *para-subordinato* (including co.co.co and co.co.pro) and *lavoro a chiamata* (job on-call). The *para-subordinato* contracts, where a worker is a quasi-self-employed, do not have an equivalent in the UK, while zero-hour contracts and *lavoro a chiamata*, though in principle relatively similar, present important differences in their limitation of use. Among the most important contracts, the *lavoro a chiamata* is only legal for people younger than 24 and older than 55 and it cannot entail more than 400 working days over 3 years⁸ (INPS, 2017a). These limitations in the use make the two contracts different in practice in the characteristics of the workers, limiting opportunities for comparison.

In Italy, further types of atypical employment are tailored to employment arrangements in specific businesses, such as cooperatives. The *socio di cooperativa* (cooperative member) can be employed by the cooperative to provide services in other organisations through a specific employment contract, becoming a *socio lavoratore* (working member). Other types of atypical employment contracts exist for specific situations, including job-sharing, homeworking (*lavoro a domicilio*), agricultural work, work in seasonal activities, ancillary work (*lavoro accessorio*). These other types of contracts present very peculiar characteristics and are predominantly used in specific sectors, making comparison between countries difficult. Furthermore, in both countries, there exist a number employment contracts which have a strong training component, including apprenticeships (*apprendistato*), traineeships, internships and stages (e.g. *tirocini* and *praticantato* in Italy). Nevertheless, the characteristics of the types of contracts tend to be bound to the overall education and training framework of the two countries, and it goes beyond labour market characteristics, making a comparison between countries meaningless for the purposes of this thesis.

The selection among dependent forms of employment could only be between fixed-term and temporary agency work. Temporary agency work is an employment contract which presents similar characteristics in the two countries considered, and more generally across Europe. It is

⁸ Exceptions are present in some sectors.

a triangular contractual relationship involving an agency worker, a temporary work agency and a hirer. The agency is responsible for providing a worker (candidate) to the hirer (client), who is used by the client (or user) to perform work (Arrowsmith, 2006). The agency is the *de jure* employer, while the hirer is the *de facto* employer (De Cuyper et al., 2007). There are generally two contracts: one between the hirer and the agency and one between the agency and the worker (BIS, 2011). The temporary agency work contract is the latter. This peculiar employment relationship can be argued to epitomise atypical employment, as the legal employer ‘lends’ the worker to a third party, which becomes the employer in practice. This form of employment has been one of the most rapidly increasing types of atypical employment in the past two decades (Arrowsmith, 2006; Voss et al., 2013; Theodore and Peck, 2014). Furthermore, it has been at the centre of many flexibility and flexicurity debates at the political level across Europe (Storrie, 2002; Wynn, 2014). For all these reasons, it has been preferred to fixed-term as the employment contract chosen for this thesis.

In order to reduce the heterogeneity of working experiences, I have decided to focus only on one sector of the economy: the service sector. This decision has been driven by several factors. Firstly, the growth of atypical employment has been mainly associated with the phenomenon of tertiarisation of the economy, which has entailed an overall shift of the workforce from manufacturing and, more generally, from the industrial sector towards services (Gregg and Wardsworth, 1999; Pontusson, 2005; Gallie, 2007). In this context, the spread in atypical jobs in post-industrial countries has been mainly driven by their increased use in the service sector (Kenworthy, 2005; Häusermann and Schwander, 2012). Both in Italy and in the UK, the vast majority of the workforce is now employed in the service sector (68% and 79% respectively in 2010, World Bank, 2017). Moreover, the majority of TA workers are employed in the service sector in each country (CIETT, 2012), making it the most relevant sector on which to focus the analysis.

3.4 Operationalisation of Dimensions of Disadvantage

The empirical analysis is structured around the three employment-related dimensions used in the analytical framework to formulate hypotheses about the disadvantages experienced by atypical workers in Italy and in the UK: employment, work and income protection. These dimensions were chosen based on the relevant dimensions within which the literature on dualism has identified institutional divides between standard and atypical workers (see chapter 2, section 2.6). This section operationalises these three dimensions and justifies the inclusion

of specific sub-dimensions of the experience of TA workers which are investigated in the empirical analysis and the exclusion of others.

3.4.1 Employment Experience

The employment experience entails two different aspects: a dynamic (related to employment paths) and a static one (related to the current employment situation). Given that the dynamic aspect is fundamental to fully understanding the static one, as the analysis will make clear, the analysis of the employment experience starts with the dynamic aspect. Firstly, I consider the overall employment biographies of TA workers both in Italy and in the UK. Specifically, changes of employment status, including movements in and out of unemployment, temporary employment and standard employment are illustrated. This allows us to understand the working histories of the individuals and in discussing the similarities and differences, both within and between countries. Secondly, the analysis discusses the role played by TAW along those employment paths, in order to assess the role of TAW in employment transitions and allowing the assessment of the experience of TAW from a dynamic perspective. Specifically, the roles of ‘stepping stone’ and ‘trap’ are discussed at length, always with a focus on the comparison between the countries.

In the second part of the analysis, attention is paid to the current employment experience. The employment disadvantages experienced by TA workers as well as the relevant coping strategies are analysed. Particularly, the analysis focuses on the experience of ‘employment precariousness’ and it considers how this affects the lives of workers both in and outside of their working lives. Reference to the dynamic aspect of the experience is made when necessary for a full understanding of the workers’ disadvantages.

Finally, the analysis considers the use of public employment services as an alternative to TAs as a tool to find employment and the experience of interviewees in this regard. Public employment services are analysed as they can be regarded the main possible way of looking for employment other than TAs and independent job search.

3.4.2 Work Experience

The work experience considers the disadvantages experienced by TA workers in a number of working conditions. Working conditions are a very broad and multifaceted category, involving several dimensions (see for instance, Letourneux, 1998; Tucker, 2003). Given this potentially

broad empirical operationalisation, in this thesis, I restricted the analysis of working conditions to the ones that are deemed most relevant for the workers' experience, including: pay, working time, relations with colleagues and job content. These can be regarded as some of the most important sub-dimensions among working conditions (Letourneux, 1998; Peña-Casas, 2009). Pay includes any earnings received in a job, including pay rise and bonuses. Working time considers any aspect related to the schedule, including working hours, daily and weekly rest periods, and annual leave. Relations with colleagues entail any working conditions associated with the social environment, such as participation in workplace activities, sociability, discrimination and intimidation (Letourneux, 1998). Finally, job content refers to the characteristics of the work activities carried out during a TA assignment.

Nevertheless, a few important aspects of conditions of work have been excluded from the analysis. Firstly, given that all interviewees for reasons of case selection (see section 3.5) were employed in low and medium-skilled service occupations, I decided not to consider health and safety among the focuses of the analysis. This can be justified by the fact that health and safety concerns in working conditions are much more relevant in the manufacturing and agricultural sector than in the service sector where health and safety related risks tend to be lower. Moreover, the majority of service occupations in which the interviewees were employed (e.g. clerical jobs, retail) presented limited opportunities to investigate disadvantages within this specific aspect of working conditions. A second significant working condition which has not been explored in the thesis is training. The reason lies in the fact that the vast majority of low and medium-skilled occupations in the service sector in which the interviewees were employed required no or very limited formal training. The majority of training activities were informal and on-the-job, making it difficult to investigate specific disadvantages associated with them.

Aside from working conditions, the work experience also investigates the power TA workers have in representing their interests at the workplace, which might include the improvement of their employment and working conditions, and the possible disadvantages they face in this regard. In order to do this, both individual and collective representation are investigated. With respect to individual representation, I explore the opportunities workers have to voice their interests and, more specifically, to bargain for their employment and working conditions, including the disadvantages arising from power relations with hirers and colleagues. Secondly, it investigates opportunities and constraints in being collectively represented and the disadvantages experienced compared to standard workers. This includes representation through trade unions but also through other organisations representing their interests.

3.4.3 Income Protection Experience

The analysis of the income protection experience considers firstly the disadvantages faced by TA workers when it comes to income, paying specific attention to the issue of ‘income insecurity’ and how it affects the lives of TA workers in the two countries. Following from this, the analysis considers the disadvantages experienced by these workers in protecting their income against a number of social risks. Several social risks have been identified in the literature, for which European welfare states have developed various forms of income protection schemes (e.g. Bonoli, 2005; Crouch, 2015). Given that this thesis focuses on disadvantages in employment, only a number of employment-related social risks are considered in the empirical analysis. The analysis concentrates on three of the main social risks in which somebody is not in work: unemployment, sickness and retirement.

Unemployment entails a situation in which a person is currently not employed but she is looking for work. The main income protection scheme against this risk is unemployment benefits. Sickness is a situation in which a person is employed but she is currently unable to work due to health reasons. Sickness pay is the main income protection scheme to protect a worker in case of sickness. Finally, retirement is a situation in which a person has reached a certain age at which she is not socially considered suitable for work any longer (Zaccaria, 2009). Pension schemes are the main forms of income protection for workers who have reached retirement. The choice of these social risks has been based on the fact that they are among the most common social risks in contemporary post-industrial societies and they may be experienced by the majority of workers at some point in their life-time. For each of them, both public and private forms of income protection are considered.

Three other significant employment-related social risks have not been included in the analysis of income protection: maternity (and more generally, parenting), disability and in-work poverty. The reason is that parenting is a social risk which might affect only a minority of people in a given sample, in a given moment, and which tends to be concentrated to a specific gender. For this reason, it has been excluded from the analysis. Nevertheless, it has been considered in the analysis of the experience of income insecurity, as will become clear in chapter 7, section 7.2. Disability is a social risk which might affect only a small minority of workers, making it difficult to assess the experience of income protection comparatively, unless selecting a specific sample which would nonetheless bias the analysis in other dimensions. Furthermore, income protection in case of in-work poverty has not been considered as in-work poverty depends on household income rather than individual income (Lohmann, 2006; Fraser et al., 2011). Thus, the number of other active workers in the same

household as well as the number of dependants is likely to affect in-work poverty as much as the employment status (Allègre, 2008), producing a high heterogeneity of situations among workers with the same employment status. This would have made the comparison of income protection experience both within and between countries difficult to analyse, given the relatively small sample of workers interviewed. Nevertheless, as for parenting, the experience of in-work poverty has been taken into consideration in the analysis of income insecurity, to have an in-depth view of the disadvantages experienced by the workers.

Finally, the thesis considers the experience of individual sources of income protection. Two sources are included in the analysis: formal credit and the family. They can be regarded as the two main sources of income protection in European countries other than employment and the welfare state (Crouch, 2015). They represent two different modes of protection, the former being relatively informal and relying on individual social networks, while the latter, as the name suggests, is formal and it is based on borrowing from the market.

3.5 Selection of Interviewees

The interviews were carried out with a selected sample of 40 full-time TA workers employed in low and medium-skilled service occupations in Bologna and in Edinburgh, as well as with other actors involved in TAW. In this section, I will summarise the reasons for this selection, highlighting the rationale behind the choices I made and explaining the strengths and limitations of alternative choices. For a detailed summary of interviewees' characteristics see the Appendix.

I have decided to include in the sample only full-time workers in order for the analysis to entail a homogenous group of workers who present similar labour market attachment characteristics. More precisely, for full-time employees, 'work' can be regarded as their main activity and we can assume it to be the interviewee's main source of sustainment. On the one hand, we may expect that, for individuals who work a limited number of hours, 'work' is not their main activity in that they may be still in education or they may be performing caring activities. People in part-time jobs may not rely on their income as the main source of sustainment, in that they may only complement other family members' earnings or they might be working on the side while already retired. This contributes to making the sample more homogenous. Should we consider people with very different labour attachments, a very heterogeneous group would be analysed, reducing the possibility of comparison across experiences both within and between countries. Moreover, being a full-time temporary worker makes the employment

situation as similar as possible to those in standard employment. This makes the comparison with standard workers more accurate, as the only difference between the two groups is the employment status. Furthermore, including only full-time workers avoids the problem of disentangling disadvantages related to the employment status with those related to the lower number of hours worked.

Another issue in the selection of interviewees was to decide whether to include only people who worked all year or people who just worked for certain spells. Including people working throughout the year would have made the sample as similar as possible to that of standard workers, who are likely to remain in the same job across the year. Nevertheless, had I excluded people working less than a full year, the issue of unemployment among TA workers would have been neglected. This would have meant to exclude what has been argued to be one of the main characteristics of temporary employment, that is the recurrent experience of unemployment (Rodgers and Rodgers, 1989; Kalleberg, 2013). The experience of unemployment may explain in part the sense of insecurity and instability among TA workers, and thus play an important role in moulding their individual experience of disadvantage. Furthermore, this would have meant excluding a high number of TA workers in both countries, though data could not be found on the percentage of time these workers spend on average in unemployment each year. However, for individuals who have been employed in TA jobs for a short period of time, being in TAW cannot be considered their main activity during the year, in that they may have been unemployed or inactive for most of the year (Feldman et al., 1994).

A similar argument may hold with respect to their source of sustenance, in that wages may not have been the main source of income for most of the year, but they might have relied mostly on personal savings, welfare benefits or their partner's income. Thus, the disadvantages experienced by those workers with relatively low labour market attachment might be partly due to the prolonged period of unemployment or inactivity, rather than to the temporary employment status. Therefore, I have considered workers who have been employed for more than six months in a year, meaning that they have been in employment for the majority of time in the year. This definition allows us to consider individuals that have worked most of the year but at the same time may have experienced spells of unemployment. Following this definition, work can be considered the main activity performed during the year and we can assume wages from employment to be one of the main sources of income. This makes the sample of interviewees comparable to standard workers in terms of labour attachment.

As regards the selection of occupations, I have only selected workers in low and medium-skilled occupations, in order to avoid people holding specific skills or employed in specific

assignments requiring highly-skilled qualifications. As already highlighted in the literature, these workers might be pursuing 'boundaryless' careers and might possess specific skills, which makes them highly employable and not convenient to be working only for one employer (Van Dyne and Ang, 1998; Marler et al., 2002). However, this is unlikely to reflect the average situation in the two countries, where the vast majority of workers are employed in medium and low-skilled jobs (CIETT, 2012). Hence, all workers were employed in occupations which did not require tertiary education, but only a high-school diploma (medium-skilled) or lower (low-skilled). Some occupations might have required specific training (e.g. nursing), but not a university degree.

Only workers between 30 and 60 years old were considered in the interviews. This rather broad age span was meant to capture people who are in the middle of their working life. The minimum age threshold was meant to exclude individuals who might still be living with their parents and who might rely on their parents' income. This is particularly true for Italy, where the majority of individuals below 30 still live with their parents (Iacovou, 2010). This difference between the countries could have also biased the results, especially when it comes to income security. The upper threshold was meant to avoid individuals who, especially in the Italian case, might be in early retirement schemes and therefore they might not be fully relying on income from employment, biasing the results when it comes to income protection and hampering comparison between countries.

No selection has been made depending on the family structure, meaning that single, partnered and childless people and people with children have been included. The reason for this was that I wanted to include a range of possible experiences in the analysis that might be partly shaped by the family structure, without confining the investigation to individuals with a specific family status.

Finally, only citizens of each country have been included in the analysis, excluding from the sample any immigrant, either EU or non-EU. On the one hand, immigrants might experience additional problems related to the immigrant status, both in terms of access to the labour market and to income protection, which might interact with their temporary employment status and might make it difficult to distinguish between the two (Fudge and Strauss, 2014). On the other hand, immigrants might present specific characteristics related to culture and language which can also interact with their employment status in shaping disadvantages (McDowell et al., 2008), making it difficult to disentangle the two, for instance when it comes to forms of discrimination at the workplace and relations with colleagues.

In order to complement data from interviews with TA workers, a number of interviews were carried out with actors who are involved in TAW. In each country, two interviews were conducted with trade union staff members who specifically work on atypical employment while one interview was carried out with a representative of a third-sector organisation dealing with issues related to atypical employment. In the UK, one interview was also carried out with a member of staff at a TA agency, while in Italy I did not manage to access TA agency staff. These interviewees helped triangulate findings from workers' interviews and to provide additional information on aspects where they might have specific insights including, for instance, employers' use of TAW for temporary agency staff or collective representation for trade unions.

With respect to the geographical locations in which to do fieldwork, the main concern was to find two areas which were as similar as possible in terms of socio-economic characteristics. This is in order to attribute, at least in principle, all differences to the institutional setting, rather than to other contextual characteristics. Certainly, a perfect matching is difficult to find in the real world and some contextual influences cannot be ruled out in principle, for example when it comes to the different stage of the business cycle in the two locations, which reflect broader contextual differences at the national level. Furthermore, the two locations needed to have an institutional setting which reflects the country-level differences rather than local idiosyncrasies. In that respect, the institutional characteristics and the policies considered to potentially influence TA workers' experiences (i.e. employment regulations, public social protection system, industrial relations) depended in both countries at the national level on the government⁹, with the exception of social assistance policies in the Italian case (managed at the municipal level within a regional regulatory framework, Madama, 2010) making institutional settings relatively homogeneous within each country. I opted for two locations which, although being above their national average in most economic indicators, were rather similar in a series of relevant socio-economic characteristics. The similarity in local characteristics allows us to assume that differences in the data can be attributed either to national-level institutions and policies or to individual idiosyncrasies, rather than to local socio-economic differences.

The specific geographical locations in which the data collection took place were Edinburgh for the British case and Bologna for the Italian case. These two cities are of broadly similar population size both as city proper and as a metropolitan area, with Bologna being slightly smaller (ONS, 2015a; ISTAT, 2015a). They are the second richest cities in their respective

⁹ With the partial exclusion of Northern Ireland.

country in terms of GDP per capita and they have relatively similar GDP per capita at the NUTS II level. They also had similar unemployment levels in the year before the fieldwork was carried out, with unemployment rate of 6.7% and 6.8% respectively in 2012, although with a diverging trend given that different stages in the business cycle in which the two countries have been in the past three years (ONS, 2015b; ISTAT, 2015b). Both cities have a well-developed and diversified service sector, including education, public services, third-sector organisations and, in the case of Edinburgh, financial services.

3.6 Data Collection and Analysis

This section describes the methodology used for data collection, its rationale and weaknesses and it describes also how data have been analysed and the limitations of the approaches used. The preliminary analysis of institutional characteristics in which TAW is embedded in the two cases (see chapter 4) was meant to constitute the background to the qualitative analysis, which was carried out through fieldwork in the two countries selected. The analysis of the institutional configurations allowed me to identify and assess institutional divides.

The decision to carry out qualitative interviews was dictated by several reasons. Firstly, the aim was to assess how institutional divides translated into experienced disadvantages. Neither a quantitative analysis or the use of a structured questionnaire with closed-ended questions would have allowed for an in-depth exploration of the interplay between institutions and dualisation processes as well as the flexibility necessary to grasp individual perspectives and points of view. The use of semi-structured rather than structured or unstructured interviews was meant, on the one hand, to provide flexibility to adapt to the interviewees' narration and to allow for breadth in responses, on the other hand, to make sure to cover all aspects relevant for subsequent analysis. The advantages of using qualitative methods in this type of study are well known in the methodology literature (see, for instance, Bryman, 2004; Blaikie 2010). In particular, qualitative methods allow us to understand the respondents' point of view, enable an in-depth analysis of specific situations/issues/processes and are more flexible in adapting to respondents' needs. As regards this research, a qualitative methodology allows us to grasp the TA workers' points of view and their perception of their situations and more specifically, of their disadvantages, enabling an exploration of their individual experience. Furthermore, qualitative methods allow an in-depth analysis of the issue to be investigated, providing a detailed picture of the different disadvantages affecting TA workers, and their relation to the institutional system.

However, qualitative studies suffer from some systematic weaknesses, including difficulty in replicability and small sample size (Bryman, 2004; Blaikie, 2010). Thus, I am aware that the qualitative methods I have used will not necessarily be representative of the overall population of TA workers in the two countries considered, given the limitation of time and space which are typical of any qualitative study. This is a common weakness of qualitative analysis which cannot be easily solved.

The fieldwork entailed interviews with a selected group of full-time TA workers in low and medium-skilled service occupations in one location in each country. 23 interviews were conducted in Italy and 24 in the UK, of which 20 in each country were with TA workers. The remaining ones were with actors involved in TAW. The number of interviews constituted a good compromise between time constraints and the necessity of in-depth analysis. More specifically, it made it possible to reach saturation (Bryman, 2004), meaning that similar data kept emerging after a number of interviews, supposedly because all variability in experienced disadvantaged had been covered.

Access to interviewees was gained through several sources in both countries. In the UK, the first interviewees were accessed through the help of a temporary agency staff who acted as a gatekeeper. The same role was played in Italy by two representatives of two trade unions specialised in atypical workers, namely NidiL-CGIL and FelSA-CISL¹⁰. The role of gatekeepers from trade union representatives in the UK was less relevant than in the Italian case, but still important, mostly through Edinburgh TUC. Other interviewees were accessed through two associations dealing with problems related to access to welfare and casualization of work, the Edinburgh Coalition Against Poverty (ECAP) and eQual in Bologna. Finally, in both countries, a few interviewees were accessed through personal connections. The partly different types of gatekeeper in the two countries might cause concern of selection bias. For instance, one might argue that the TA workers a trade union is in contact with might systematically differ from TA workers a temporary agency is in contact with. Nevertheless, the majority of interviewees were found through a snowballing strategy, mostly through colleagues and former colleagues of previous interviewees. Thus, while the initial gatekeepers quite differed between the two countries and this could have caused selection bias in the results, the fact that most interviewees were found through word of mouth mitigates these concerns.

¹⁰ As will be explained in chapter 4, section 4.6, these are the two most important trade unions for TA workers in the Italian context.

The questionnaire was constructed in order to give the interviewees the maximum possible freedom to discuss their experience and the problems faced, and at the same time to guide the discussion taking into account the time limit. Sub-questions were asked only in case that the interviewee failed to specify relevant details, or she was too vague or she did not mention a specific aspect of her experience in her answer. Otherwise, the interviewee was free to talk once the main question had been asked. The questionnaire was formulated in the two languages in which the interviews were carried out (Italian and English), taking into account the possible slight shifts that are necessary to make the questions fully comparable from one linguistic and cultural context to the other. After the questionnaire had been formulated, 2-3 pilot interviews were carried out in each country in order to refine the questions and to eventually amend them. The interviews were conducted in Italian and English and they were then translated into English for the qualitative analysis. Fieldwork took place between June 2013 and May 2014 in the UK, and between December 2013 and October 2014 in Italy.

The qualitative analysis of the interviews was carried out by using a qualitative analysis software (i.e. NVivo). Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis (CAQDAS) is increasingly used in qualitative research in the social sciences, and its advantages are well documented in the literature (see, for instance, Gibbs et al., 2002; Silver and Lewis, 2014). The main advantages compared to a non-computer assisted analysis include data management, facilitation of data search and retrieval, exploration of data according to content or topic, easier coding and re-coding, a more meaningful organisation of data and the creation of connections between data (Silver and Lewis, 2014). In order to carry out the qualitative analysis, I made use of mainly topic coding for the identification of the main themes and topics in the interviews and analytic coding at a later stage, in order to establish connections across interviews, to identify dominant narratives and for data interpretation (Richards, 2005; Richards and Morse, 2007).

3.7 Ethical Issues

The project has been classified as Level 2 according to the University of Edinburgh School of Social and Political Sciences Research Ethics Procedure. The ethical concerns were thoroughly discussed with supervisors and the measures suggested to minimise ethical risks were approved by both supervisors and the Director of the Graduate School, as established by the School of Social and Political Sciences, University of Edinburgh.

The main ethical concerns as regards this research project mainly entailed a breach of confidentiality of sensitive information and possible negative consequences for interviewees in their current workplace. With respect to confidentiality, I asked all my interviewees to sign an informed consent form, explaining the purpose of my research and asking them whether the interview could be recorded, assuring them of confidentiality of the information provided. The files were stored on my PC and they have not been given to anyone but to two transcribers (one for the British and one for the Italian interviewees), who both signed a confidentiality agreement. The transcriptions were all properly anonymised and I did not grant access to them to anyone but myself. As regards the possible consequences in the workplace for the interviewees, they were minimised by the strategy of gaining access to interviewees and by the way the interviews were conducted. Possible interviewees were privately contacted by the temporary agency, the trade union staff or the association of which they were members. If they were interested in being interviewed they contacted me through the email address provided by the gatekeepers, thus assuring nobody at their workplace would know. The place where the interviews were carried out were not close to the interviewees' workplace unless the interviewee expressed her desire to be interviewed near there for her convenience. Moreover, I did not reveal the interviewee's identity nor the content of the interview to anyone, assuring all information was kept confidential.

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter has illustrated the research design of the research project. It has highlighted the rationale behind a comparative approach and it has justified the choice of Italy and the UK as comparative case studies. Italy and the UK have been selected for the analysis as two countries with several similarities as regards their socio-economic characteristics but also significant differences with respect to their institutional setting, including employment regulations, industrial relations and social protection systems. Although a more detailed analysis of the institutional characteristics regarding the atypical contract of choice, namely, temporary agency work, is illustrated in the next chapter, it suffices to say at this point that these two different institutional settings have been argued by authors in the dualism literature to have led to different divides between atypical and standard workers.

This chapter has also shown the reasons for choosing TAW as the type of employment contract for the comparative analysis, as well as the selected sector. In this chapter, I have also operationalised the employment-related dimensions within which the individual disadvantages between temporary agency workers and standard workers will be investigated. The

operationalisation of the dimensions of analysis could not entail all aspects of experience of TA workers, as a thesis would have not sufficed. Nevertheless, through the aspects selected, this thesis aims to capture the most significant facets of experience and their related disadvantages.

Finally, this chapter has described the selection of interviewees as well as the data collection and analysis. The 20 interviewees selected in each country were aged 30-60, non-immigrant, working full-time in medium and low-skilled occupations in Bologna and Edinburgh, two cities with comparable socio-economic characteristics. Furthermore, seven interviews have been carried out with other significant stakeholders involved in TAW at the local level.

Having briefly sketched here the differences in the countries' institutional frameworks, the next chapter is devoted to the detailed analysis of their institutional setting in which TAW is embedded. This allows for a refinement of the hypotheses formulated in section 2.6, before carrying out the empirical analysis for each of the employment-related dimensions identified above.

4. Comparing TAW in Italy and in the UK

4.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the characteristics of TAW in Italy and in the UK. However, before illustrating the comparison between the two countries, it considers the use of TAW by employers at a more general level. It then describes the main characteristics of the TA workforce in the two countries. Furthermore, it provides an analysis of the institutional framework which regulates the temporary agency sector. The second part of the chapter discusses the institutional framework in which TAW is embedded in the two countries. The analysis is meant to highlight the similarities and differences in the institutional characteristics TA workers face compared to standard workers in Italy and in the UK. This enables us to set the two countries in relation to the hypotheses formulated in the analytical framework (see chapter 2, section 2.6). As is shown, the hypotheses broadly hold for the two countries for TAW. However, where institutional characteristics are found to partly misalign with initial hypotheses, the hypotheses are refined.

Firstly, I analyse the employment rights associated with TAW and how they differ from those for standard employment. The analysis shows a different divide in employment rights between standard and TA workers in the two countries which, I argue, can be traced back to the different legal employment status of TA workers in the two institutional contexts. Secondly, I discuss the collective representation of TA workers. Once again, the characteristics of collective representation for these workers can be claimed to reflect the broader features of workers' collective representation in Italy and in the UK, although certain specific features are discussed. Finally, I consider income protection schemes to which TA workers have access for three major social risks: unemployment, sickness and retirement. As clearly emerges from the analysis, institutional divides in income protection tend to mirror the macro-characteristics of the social protection systems of the two countries. These reflect the features of the two welfare regimes to which the two countries belong, but they are also partly engendered by the specific legal status of TA workers and by other features of public income protection schemes.

The chapter is organised as follows. Section 4.2 synthesises the use employers make of TAW. Section 4.3 summarises the main characteristics of TA workers in the two countries. Section 4.4 compares the regulations of TAW in Italy and the UK. Section 4.5 discusses the divide in employment rights between TA and standard workers in comparative perspective. Section 4.6 contrasts the two collective representation systems of TA workers. Section 4.7 analyses access to income protection and related disadvantages in case of unemployment (section 4.7.1),

sickness (section 4.7.2) and retirement (section 4.7.3). Finally, section 4.8 draws the conclusions.

4.2 Use of TAW by Employers

The literature has identified several uses employers make of TAW. Firstly, it has identified TAW as a ‘screening device’ for potential employees (Houseman et al., 2003; Peck and Theodore, 2006). Given the asymmetry of information, employers might not be willing to hire a worker permanently without knowing her actual skills and productivity. In that respect, TAW can be viewed by employers as a tool to provide a probationary period to assess a worker’s productivity, skills or commitment (Gash, 2005). Therefore, TAW offers the possibility for employers to ‘try out’ a worker without any long-term commitment but it also allows the worker to try the job without commitment (Ford and Slater, 2005). In this case, the matching between a job and a candidate can be ‘tested’ and later transformed into a standard contract should the matching be satisfactory. Thus, TAW can function as a tool to reduce information asymmetries before a standard contract is signed.

A second important TAW use for employers is that of providing a ‘flexible buffer of workers’ in the case of volatility of labour demand or supply (Forde and Slater, 2005, p. 252). On the one hand, in the case of increased labour demand, employers might need more workers in specific periods of time when production temporarily increases, or when a specific project or target needs to be achieved. On the other hand, in the event of a decrease in labour supply, employers need to counteract temporary labour shortages, which might be due to standard workers’ sickness, annual leave or parental leave. TAW can thus provide the temporary workforce to fulfill labour supply needs.

A third relevant use of TWA is as a substitute to permanent employment. Particularly, it has been argued it might constitute a less costly alternative than standard contracts, given that they result in savings on dismissal procedures (Debels, 2005; Güell and Petrongolo, 2007; Barbieri and Scherer, 2009). Employers might want to save on direct labour costs, given that TAW in some countries can be paid less, although agency fees might make the option less convenient. They might also want to use TAW to cut non-wage labour costs, such as contributions and occupational schemes, given that TA workers might not be entitled or they might be entitled to less generous benefits (Lodovici, 2001a; Hevenstone, 2010). Finally, they might want save on dismissal costs. In the case of the former, temporary agencies might provide easy and fast

job replacements, acting as an outsourced HR service. As for the latter, TAW might be employed in order not to confront possible litigation costs, or to avoid paying redundancy payments and to simplify firing procedures (Mitlacher, 2007).

As already mentioned in chapter 2, section 2.3, the reasons for using TAW by employers is thought to vary depending on the institutional framework, which provides different incentives and constraints in the use of different types of contracts. Hence, in countries with a large employment protection divide between standard and atypical employment, such as Italy, we might expect employers to use TAW as a substitute to standard employment. In contrast, in countries with relatively small employment protection divides, such as the UK, we expect employers to have less incentive in using TAW as a cost reduction tool and to use TAW either as a screening device or as a buffer against labour volatility.

4.3 The TA Workforce in Italy and in the UK

In 2012, temporary agency workers constituted 3.9% of the total workforce in the UK and 1.2% in Italy (CIETT, 2015). Although the reasons for this discrepancy could not be identified in the literature, it might be due to the greater availability of other atypical employment contracts in Italy (such as *para-subordinati* or work through a cooperative) which might serve similar purposes for employers. However, it may also be due to the spread of specialised temporary agencies for high skilled jobs in the UK, which are uncommon in Italy. Italy experienced a rapid increase in the use of TAW in the decade before the financial crisis, (226.1% in the 2000-2008 period, Voss et al., 2013) after its initial legalisation in 1997 and its further liberalisation in 2003, as well as a further growth in the years immediately after the crisis (CIETT, 2015). The UK, where TAW has been legal for several decades, saw a more modest but still significant increase over the same period, both before the crisis (18.8% between 2000 and 2008) and after the crisis (Voss et al., 2013; CIETT, 2015). In both countries, the majority of temporary agency workers are employed in the service sector, mostly in low and medium-skilled occupations¹¹ (CIETT, 2012). When we consider the average duration of assignments, the situation is more polarised in the UK than in Italy: in the UK, 49% of assignments last more than 3 months compared to 30% in Italy, but 31% last less than a month in the UK compared to only 20% in Italy (CIETT, 2015).

¹¹ However, in Italy, the manufacturing sector employs a significant minority of TA workers. In the UK, TAW is also used in some high-skilled occupations (such as IT and engineering).

With respect to socio-demographic characteristics (see Table 1), in 2013, the gender composition of TA workers tended to be biased towards men (55%) in Italy and women (55%) in the UK (CIETT, 2015), though the gender composition was relatively balanced in both countries. If we consider the educational attainment of TA workers in 2010, roughly a third of workers (30% in Italy and 37% in the UK) have not completed secondary education, while 39% of workers in the UK but only 25% of workers in Italy have completed tertiary education, reflecting the higher use of TAW in high-skilled occupations in the UK (CIETT, 2012).

Table 1. Socio-demographic characteristics of TA workers by country, 2013

	UK	Italy
Gender		
Men	45%	55%
Women	55%	45%
Education		
Below secondary	37%	30%
Secondary	24%	45%
Tertiary	39%	25%

Source: CIETT (2015)

4.4 Temporary Agency Sector Regulations

The regulation of the TA sector in Italy and in the UK can be argued to broadly reflect the overall national orientation in the regulation of employment in each country. In the UK, sectoral regulations in the TA sector are loose, in line with an overall deregulation of the labour market (see chapter 3, section 3.2.1) with little or no restriction on the use of TAW by employers. By contrast, in Italy sectoral regulations are tighter and many limitations in the use of TAW as well as other atypical contracts are established by both national legislation and collective agreements, limiting the use of atypical employment for each employer and the overall duration of temporary contracts.

The UK was among the first countries in Europe to introduce temporary agency work. The sector was firstly regulated by the Employment Agency Act 1973 while the Conduct of Employment Agencies and Employment Businesses Regulations Act 1976 provides a further regulatory framework. This legislation covers all agencies but the ones hiring nurses and health-related occupations for which the Nurses Agency Act 1957 applies. In case an agency employs both nurses and other staff both legislations apply (Pedersen et al., 2004). The regulatory framework was later amended by the Deregulation and Contracting Out Act 1994 which abolished the licensing system. Since then, the enforcement of regulations depends on the Employment Agencies Standards inspectorate (EAS). Although the previous licensing system was considered ineffective, the current Inspectorate has a limited amount of resources (both human and financial) and this prevents any form of effective control over the sector. Agencies employing nurses are instead required to get a license from local authorities who are also responsible for enforcement (Pedersen et al., 2004). Following the Morecambe Bay cockling disaster, in which 21 cockle pickers drowned, the Gangmasters Act 2004 reintroduced a licensing system for agencies working in agricultural, fishing and food packaging sector (The Gangmasters (Licensing) Act 2004). A further important amendment was the enactment of the Conduct of Employment Agencies and Employment Businesses Regulations Act 2003 which substituted the one from 1976. The Code of Conduct sets rules in temporary agencies business¹² and establishes conduct practices in the TA sector¹³ (The Conduct of Employment Agencies and Employment Businesses Regulations Act 2003).

TAW in the UK can be said to be comparatively loosely regulated also when it comes to the limitation in the use of TAW (Coe et al., 2009). No restrictions are present with respect to reasons for use, limits of duration and there are no sectoral or occupational limitations for the use of TAW. The only restrictions which apply are the impossibility to use TA workers to replace employees on strike and the obligation to ensure that TA workers have the necessary

¹² Including the following prohibitions: to sell other businesses, to share the workers' personal details, to advertise non-existent jobs, to charge the worker any cost or fee for providing services (with exceptions in the entertainment and fashion business) and to hire workers to substitute workers on strike.

¹³ Among the most important conduct practices, the agency has to: provide all terms and conditions to the hirer before the contract starts and provide all relevant information about the job to the worker before the actual start of the contract. This includes: pay, employment conditions, type of occupation and working time, ensure that TA workers have the legally required qualifications to carry out the work. It must not prohibit the worker from being directly hired by the hirer, it has to pay the worker even if the hirer has not paid the agency, it must ensure to have all the necessary information about the job from the hirer in order to provide a suitable worker and all information relevant to the worker has to be provided in written form.

equipment for the job (Pedersen et al., 2004). TA workers are generally hired on a temporary basis by the agency, but in a few cases they might be hired in a pay-between-assignment contract. In the latter case, the TA worker is formally an employee of the temporary agency and she gets paid even when her assignment ends and she is not employed in a new one¹⁴ (CitizenAdvice, 2015; GOV.UK, 2015d).

In contrast to the UK, Italy was one of the last countries in Western Europe to introduce TAW. The so-called ‘Treu package’ (Law No. 196/1997), which legalized TAW in Italy, included an overall reshuffle of employment contracts in order to increase flexibility at the margin in the Italian labour market and to facilitate access to work to some social categories with low labour market attachment, namely women, the young and the long-term unemployed (Barbieri and Scherer, 2009). The Treu reform reduced regulation strictness on many temporary contracts and legalized TAs for the first time (Graziano and Jessoula, 2011). The delayed introduction of TAW in Italy was partly due to the fear of trade unions of possible abuses in specific sectors of the Italian economy. This fear translated into the prohibition of the use of TAW in the construction and the agricultural sector, where *caporalato* (illegal recruitment of workers for very low wages) was quite spread, especially in the South. However, the prohibition was lifted only a few years later, in 2000 (Pedersen et al., 2004).

The most important legislative regulation for TAW was implemented in 2003. The Biagi Law (Legislative Decree No. 276/2003) introduced a series of changes in the Italian labour market in order to further increase its flexibility (Jessoula et al., 2010). Since then, TAs have been allowed to perform other activities that complement or expand their more traditional business¹⁵. The licensing system, reformed through successive decrees in 2003 and 2004, is centrally managed by the Ministry of Labour and Public Policies. The law also establishes rules for agencies’ business and for the conduct of practices, which are similar to those of the British Code of Conduct. These include the prohibition against providing TA workers to substitute employees on strike, providing TA workers for firms or production units where there have been collective dismissals in the previous 6 months and charging the worker any direct fee¹⁶.

¹⁴ In the waiting period, the person gets paid 50% of previous pay or the minimum wage, whatever is higher (GOV.UK, 2015d).

¹⁵ More specifically, besides the traditional activity of providing workers to their clients, agencies have been allowed to create workers’ databases, organise training activities for candidates, select workers on behalf of the hirer and support outplacement on behalf of a firm (INPS, 2013).

¹⁶ Furthermore, the agency is obliged to: provide all terms and conditions to the hirer; provide all relevant information about the job to the candidate; ensure that TA workers have the required qualifications for the job; must not prohibit the employer from directly hiring the worker; pay the

Until 2000, the employment legislation established a ban on the use of TAW in jobs with little skill content. However, since then the ban has been lifted (Pedersen et al., 2004). However, quantitative limitations in the use of TAW are established by national collective agreements for each sector. For instance, in the commerce sector, the number of TA workers cannot be beyond 15% of the permanent workforce in each firm (or up to 2 in firms with fewer than 15 employees) and the total number of workers employed on a temporary contract cannot be more than 28% p.a.¹⁷ (Burroni and Carrieri, 2011; Camera, 2014).

The Biagi Law 2003 establishes that workers can be employed by the TA on a fixed-term or on an open-ended¹⁸ basis. In the latter case, which tends to be quite rare in practice, the person is entitled to be paid a minimum amount during the waiting period between assignments¹⁹ (INPS, 2014). The Biagi law also states sectoral and occupational restrictions in the use of TAW, and it establishes that hirers have to specify the reasons for use (Voss et al., 2013). However, the reasons for use are vague in both their formulation and their application, leaving enough flexibility to employers in the use of TAW. Furthermore, the law grants some exceptions for specific categories of workers with low employability (including the long-term unemployed or people under industrial restructuring benefit schemes) as well as in cases specified by collective agreements (Law No. 276/2003). Moreover, the labour reform of 2012, the so-called Fornero Reform (Law No. 92/2012) loosened restrictions, by establishing the possibility to employ a TA worker for up to 12 months without the necessity to give any reason for use. The Fornero Law 2012 also establishes the maximum number of extensions and renewals as 6, and the maximum total duration of the employment relationship as 36 months²⁰. If the term is not respected, the contract will automatically be converted into a permanent one (Law No. 92/2012). The recent employment reform enacted by the Renzi government in 2015, the so-called Jobs Act, whose applicability goes beyond the scope of the analysis in this thesis, has introduced little change in the regulation of TAW. The most important modification has

worker even though the hirer has not paid the agency; check hirers' healthy and safety standards; ensure to have all the necessary information about the job from the hirer. All the information relevant to the worker has to be provided in written form (CPO-UIL, 2006).

¹⁷ Other quantitative limits in the service economy include, for instance, 13% of permanent workers in telecommunications, 30% of permanent workers in cleaning, 30% of total workforce in tourism.

¹⁸ Specifically, open-ended TA contracts are possible only for a number of occupations (e.g. cleaning services, transport, construction, call-centre operator, social care, porter services and all other occupations established by sectoral agreements). For fixed-term contracts, the hirer has to provide technical, productive, organisational or substitution reasons for the employment of TA workers (Legislative Decree No. 276/2003).

¹⁹ Not less than 700 euros per month, and the time does not accrue annual leave, redundancy pay or any other legal provisions. (CCNL, 2012; INPS, 2014).

²⁰ 42 months if during the first 24 months only 2 renewals/extensions have been used.

been the elimination of the ‘reasons for use’ in the TA contract (Legislative Decree No. 81/2015).

Overall, while the UK can be considered to present a deregulated framework in the temporary agency sector and limited sectoral and occupational regulations in the use of TAW. In Italy, TAW can be argued to still be highly regulated, with many restrictions and limitations on the use of TAW established by both national legislation and collective agreements. This can be argued to reflect the broader national orientation in the regulation of the labour market, with the UK presenting a deregulated legal framework, typical of a Liberal regime, while Italy has opted for a partial deregulation of atypical employment, in line with many other Continental and especially Southern European countries.

Table 2. Summary Comparative Table for TAW Regulation in the UK and Italy

	United Kingdom	Italy
Licensing system	None – exception for the nursing, agricultural, fishing and food packaging sectors	Yes
Monitoring authority	Employment Agencies Standard inspectorate	Ministry of Labour and Social Policies
Sectoral and occupational restrictions	None	Yes, regulated by law and collective agreements
Reasons for use	None	Yes
Duration limits	None	Yes, 6 renewals in 36 months
Current relevant legislation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Employment Agency Act 1973 - Gangmasters (Licensing) Act 2004 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Biagi Law 2003 - Fornero Law 2012 - Contratti Collettivi Nazionali del Lavoro (CCNL)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conduct of Employment Agencies and Employment Businesses Regulations Act 2003 - Temporary and Agency Workers (Equal Treatment) Bill 2010 	
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Source: Own elaboration

4.5 TA Workers' Employment Rights

The two countries can be said to provide very different employment regulation frameworks as regards TAW. Although part of the differences between the two countries can be traced back to the differences between Liberal and Southern European countries identified in the dualism literature, others are specific to the legal status of TAW as established by labour law.

In the UK, the definition of the employment status of an individual is relevant in that different employment rights are associated with different employment statuses (Böheim and Mühlberger, 2006). Historically, British legislation has distinguished between a contract of services (i.e. employees), mostly regulated by labour law, and a contract for services (i.e. self-employed), mostly regulated by commercial law (Davies and Freedland, 2000; Hegewisch, 2002). This dichotomous distinction had been increasingly criticised for not taking into account the increasing use of atypical forms of employment in the British economy which do not fall clearly into either category. The Employment Rights Act 1996 was the first to employ the new category of 'worker' which includes both employees and the so-called dependent self-employed, i.e. workers who do not have a contract of employment but who are economically dependent on an employer, and which would include also TA workers (Burchell et al., 1999). This new category has been subsequently used in several employment-related acts, including the National Minimum Wage Act 1998, regulations related to the Working Time Directive and anti-discrimination laws.

Despite these changes, the employment status of many workers in atypical employment remains unclear (Burchell et al., 1999; Böheim and Mühlberger, 2006). Court decisions have used several criteria to determine the employment status of an individual²¹, but the discretion in applying different weights to these criteria have failed to produce consistent decisions across employment fields. This means, for instance, that a worker might be legally regarded as an employee for tax and social security purposes but as self-employed with regard to access to contractual schemes (Böheim and Mühlberger, 2006). Hence, TA workers, together with other atypical workers, including workers on zero-hour contracts and in job-on-call contracts, persevere in an ill-defined employment status, granting them certain employment rights of standard employees but not others. Nonetheless, an exception applies in the uncommon situation in which a person is employed by the agency in a pay-between-assignment contract. In the latter case, the worker is regarded as an employee of the agency and not as a TA worker (CitizenAdvice, 2015; GOV.UK, 2015d). Therefore, although TA workers experience multiple disadvantages in employment rights compared to standard workers, the main divide in the UK context can be argued to be not between standard and atypical workers, but rather between those legally regarded as employees vis-à-vis non-employees. It is the ill-defined employment status of some atypical contracts that prevents entitlement to certain employment rights reserved to employees rather than the fixed duration of employment.

A number of basic employment rights apply to all ‘workers’. These include the minimum wage, health and safety, working time regulations and protection against discrimination (Burchell et al., 1999). In addition, in the field of tax and national insurance contributions, TA workers are legally regarded as if they were employees. As we will see in detail in the next section, this enables TA workers to have access to all statutory welfare provisions. Furthermore, TA workers are eligible for unfair dismissal. Nevertheless, unfair dismissal legislation in the UK is only reserved for employees who have completed 2 years of employment for the same employer (GOV.UK, 2016), *de facto* limiting access to those rights only to employees who hold a relatively long employment position. It can thus be argued that the divide in this case is based on tenure rather than on the employment status of workers, although this disproportionately affects workers in temporary contracts.

²¹ These include: control (the level of discretion the person has in carrying out an activity), integration (how much the activity performed is integrated into the firm organisation), economic reality (how far economic risks are shared between the employer and the worker), mutuality of obligation (the existence of obligations by the employer to provide work and by the worker to accept the work offered) (Burchell et al., 1999).

Nevertheless, TA workers are not legally considered employees in a number of other rights, most importantly, when it comes to access to occupational benefits. Moreover, the EU Agency Workers Directive (2008/104/EC) meant to entitle TA workers with equal treatment compared to standard employees in a number of fields. Following the EU Directive, the UK Government issued the Temporary and Agency Workers (Equal Treatment) Bill 2010, granting TA workers equal treatment in a number of fields from which they were previously excluded (BIS, 2011). However, equal treatment is guaranteed only for access to firm facilities and access to information on job vacancies from the first day of work. All the other terms and conditions are subjected to equal treatment only after a 12-week qualifying period, including key elements of pay²² (including overtime pay, holiday pay) and working time (including night work, rest periods, rest breaks, annual leave) (BIS, 2011; CitizenAdvice, 2015).

The Italian employment legislation distinguishes between employees, self-employed and *parasubordinati*, with the latter regarded as equivalent to dependent self-employed. However, unlike in the British case, the Italian legislation clearly states to which category an employment contract belongs and, in contrast to the UK case, TA workers are legally regarded as employees (INPS, 2013). This means that TA workers in Italy are fully entitled to temporary employees' employment rights. Compared to the UK, TAW employment regulations in Italy are governed by both law and sectoral collective agreements between trade unions and employers' organisations. National labour law in Italy is meant to provide a general regulatory framework, leaving the responsibility to the social partners to define rules and rights concerning occupations in each sector. National sectoral agreements, called *Contratti Collettivi Nazionali di Lavoro* (CCNL), establish most rules regulating economic aspects (e.g. pay) and employment conditions aspects (e.g. working time) for labour contracts in each sector. Since 1998, the year after TAW was legalised, the TA sector has had its own CCNL, which is now renewed every 3 years²³ (Pedersen et al., 2004; CCNL, 2012).

TA workers are legally considered temporary employees and both legislation and collective agreements guarantee equal treatment to comparable workers in the user firm. Notwithstanding, the Biagi Law 2003 granted some exceptions for certain categories of workers with particularly low employability²⁴, with the aim to facilitate employment among these categories. The Legislative Decree No. 24/2012, on transposing the European Directive on temporary agency work (2008/104/CE) into national legislation, expanded the categories

²² Equal pay does not apply to people in a pay between assignment contract (CitizenAdvice, 2015).

²³ Before 2009, the regulatory part of the CCNL was renewed separately from the economic part, every 4 years and 2 years respectively.

²⁴ Women, the young and the long-term unemployed.

of workers for which derogation from equal treatment is possible. However, the Fornero Reform 2012 repealed any derogation from the principle of equal treatment (Voss et al., 2013).

Overall, while in the UK the entitlement of TA workers to equal treatment is guaranteed only after 12 weeks of employment, in Italy TA workers enjoy equal treatment from the first day of assignment. These considerations can be used to refine some of the initial hypotheses. We can hypothesise TA workers in the UK to experience a disadvantage in working conditions compared to standard workers, as they are only entitled to some employment rights from the first day of employment (e.g. health and safety, protection against discrimination) but to others only after 12 weeks (e.g. equal pay, working time). By contrast, TA workers in Italy and those in the UK who have been employed in the same assignment for more than 12 weeks should not experience any disadvantage, as stated in the initial hypotheses.

Table 3. Summary Comparative Table for TA Workers' Employment Rights in the UK and Italy

	United Kingdom	Italy
Employment status	Ill-defined*	Fixed-term employee**
Protection against unfair dismissal	Yes, but only after 2 years of continuous employment	Yes
Equal pay	Yes, but only after 12 weeks	Yes
Equal working time	Yes, but only after 12 weeks	Yes

*In the case of pay between assignment contracts, the person is legally regarded as an employee of the agency; **individuals might be hired by the agency as permanent employees. Source: Own elaboration

4.6 Collective Representation

As already mentioned in chapter 3, section 3.2.1, collective representation and, more specifically, collective bargaining varies greatly between the UK and Italy. As is described below, collective representation for TA workers broadly reflects the general characteristics of the industrial relations systems in the two countries.

In the UK, collective bargaining has a limited role in the regulation of TAW. Apart from some exceptions in the entertainment industry, there are no agreements involving a plurality of

agencies. The Recruitment Employment Confederation (REC), which is the largest temporary agencies' federation, does not negotiate agreements with trade unions on behalf of its members, leaving individual agencies the opportunity to negotiate agreements on a voluntary basis. However REC and the Trade Union Congress (TUC) collaborate in a number of fields involving TA workers' conditions, such as training, good practices and health and safety (Pedersen et al., 2004). Given that REC has no mandate to negotiate inter-sectoral collective agreements, the only employers' organisation which is able to do so is the Confederation of Business Industry (CBI) (Voss et al., 2013). The CBI and the TUC have been involved in a tripartite agreement with the UK government for the provision of equal treatment to TA workers. Nevertheless, inter-sectoral collective agreements of this kind, involving relevant social partners for the legislative regulation of TAW, are far from being systematic (Arrowsmith, 2009).

Despite the very limited role of collective agreements at the inter-sectoral and sectoral levels, collective agreements exist at the firm level. Individual agencies have traditionally made agreements with trade unions in a number of areas, including individual representation, pay rates and training (Pedersen et al., 2004). The most important agreements have been signed at the national level between large temporary agency companies and national trade unions in strongly unionised sectors. For instance, Manpower and Adecco, two of the most active TA companies in the country, have signed agreements with some of the most important trade unions for the regulation of TAW in specific sectors. Local agencies and agencies recruiting in specific sectors have also signed numerous agreements with trade unions (Pedersen et al., 2004). Nevertheless, these agreements are far from being the rule. Furthermore, dialogue between agencies or employers and unions tends to be limited to situations where the interests of both coincide, but no agreement is generally reached in other cases (Voss et al., 2013).

Collective agreements involving user firms also play a role in the regulation of TAW. An example is the agreement between ASDA (a supermarket chain) and the trade union Unite to grant equal treatment to TA workers before new legislation came into force (Voss et al., 2013). Other collective agreements at the firm level involve limitations in the use of TAW, lengths of contracts and rules for the conversion of TA contracts into permanent ones (Pedersen et al., 2004). However, these agreements tend to have a limited scope and all have a voluntary basis. With respect to other forms of self-regulation within the sector, the REC, which represents the majority of TAs in the country, provides a Code of Professional Practice in the provision of the service which all member agencies have to abide. The Code establishes some general rules

of good practice including, for instance, transparency, work relationships, ethical recruitment and respect for diversity (REC, 2014).

In Italy, there are three trade unions specifically for atypical workers, including temporary agency workers. These trade unions are affiliated with the three main trade union confederations, CGIL, CISL and UIL respectively. Nidil-Nuove identità del Lavoro (New identity of Work) is affiliated with CGIL, FeLSA – Federazione Italiana Lavoratori Somministrati (Italian Federation of Temporary Agency Workers) is associated with CISL, and Tem.p@, formerly CpO– Coordinamento per l’Occupazione (Coordination for Employment), is affiliated with UIL (Benassi and Vlandas, 2015). Collective bargaining is comparatively more coordinated. The national sectoral collective agreement (CCNL) is the most relevant one, as company or territorial agreements can breach the CCNL in part only if the changes favour the worker. The CCNL is binding for all workers within a specific sector, regardless of their trade union membership. The CCNL for TAW is signed between Assolavoro (the National association of temporary agencies) and by the three trade unions representing TA workers. The first CCNL for TAW was signed in 1998, right after the introduction of TAW, and it is updated every three years (Choi and Mattoni, 2010; Benassi and Vlandas, 2015). The current one was signed in 2012 (CCNL, 2012). For instance, the CCNL establishes that TA workers have the right to elect their own representatives at three levels: national, local and firm level. With respect to the latter, they are allowed to elect representatives in a user company which employs more than 20 TA workers for over 3 months, which become part of the *Rappresentanza Sindacale Unitaria* or *RSU* (Workplace Union Representation) (Leonardi, 2009; Burroni and Carrieri, 2011).

Besides the regulatory role played by collective bargaining at the national level, the law allows the possibility for bargaining in the TA sector at the local and firm level although this is rarely used in practice (Voss et al., 2013). Local and firm-level bargaining, where present, usually happens between a given employer and the representatives of the trade union or federation in a given employment sector. Nevertheless, these agreements can also regulate the atypical and temporary agency workforce. In that respect, representatives of Nidil, FeLSA and CpO/Tem.p@ can generally take part in negotiations, although they generally take a more marginal position compared to the sectoral union federation (Burroni and Carrieri, 2011). It is also worth mentioning that unions representing atypical workers take part in bilateral funds called Ebitemp and Formatemp. These funds are jointly managed by unions and employers and are meant to provide source of income support (Ebitemp) and training (Formatemp) for atypical workers (Durazzi, 2015).

In conclusion, collective representation of TA workers in the UK can be argued to be more limited and somewhat patchier than in Italy. In the British context, TA workers do not have specific trade unions representing them and they have limited chances to have their interests represented at different levels of collective bargaining, with a few exceptions. However, these narrow opportunities for collective representation partly reflect a more general disempowerment of workers' collective representation in the UK context since the 1980s. In Italy, collective representation plays a more prominent role in employment regulation than in the UK and TA workers are represented by specific union federations for atypical workers. Nevertheless, despite nationally coordinated collective bargaining for the TA sector, most regulations of TAW happen through collective bargaining practices between employers and the trade union federations representing workers in a specific sector, although the union federations for atypical workers can take part in the negotiations.

Overall, the analysis of the collective representation system does not allow for picking between the two alternative hypotheses formulated in the analytical framework, derived from the dualism and the revitalisation literature (see chapter 2, section 2.6.2). With respect to representation of TA workers, on the one hand, TA workers in the UK might feel more disempowered compared to TA workers in Italy, given the more limited power of unions at the workplace. On the other hand, the stronger position of unions in Italy, especially in medium and large firms, might be offset by the fact that sectoral unions representing standard workers are the dominant negotiators of collective agreements. This might create a larger experienced divide between TA and standard workers in Italy compared to the UK.

Table 4. Summary Comparative Table for TA Workers' Collective Representation in the UK and Italy

	United Kingdom	Italy
Temporary Agencies Confederations	Recruitment and Employment Confederation (REC)	Assolavoro
Trade unions representing specifically TA workers	None	Nidil-CGIL FeLSA-CISL Tem.p@-UIL

Sectoral Collective Agreements	None	Yes, National Sectoral Agreement for TA Workers
Company Collective Agreements	Yes, but not systematic	Possible, but not used in practice*

*Company collective agreements between employers and sectoral unions also regulate TAW. Source: Own elaboration

4.7 Income Protection

This section briefly describes the main forms of income protection available to TA workers in Italy and in the UK in relation to the following social risks: unemployment, sickness and retirement. Attention is particularly paid to how their income protection differs compared with standard workers. Income protection for TA workers in the two countries broadly reflects the distinction between Liberal and Mediterranean welfare regimes identified in the dualism literature (see chapter 2, section 2.6.3). Nevertheless, there exist specific characteristics of the income protection system which deviate from the general characteristics of the welfare system. These are discussed and, where necessary, initial hypotheses are refined accordingly.

4.7.1 Protection in Case of Unemployment

Protection in the case of unemployment can be argued to epitomise the characteristics of the welfare regimes to which the countries belong. The British welfare system provides protection mainly through flat-rate means-tested benefits, allowing all TA workers on a low income to access public income protection. By contrast, the Italian system is structured to provide high protection for workers in permanent employment, especially those in the manufacturing industry and employed by medium and large firms, through generous contribution-based unemployment benefits (UBs) and other income protection schemes, but limited protection for other workers. This leaves TA workers with limited contribution histories with no or very limited protection, as there is no national minimum income scheme and means-tested benefits for people on a low income are scant and fragmented (Jessoula et al., 2010; Madama, 2010).

In the UK, there are two types of UBs, a contribution-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) and an income-based JSA²⁵. Contribution-based JSA can be claimed depending on how much the worker has paid in contributions in the 2 tax years before the benefit claim. The worker can receive JSA for up to 182 days and the amount depends on the age (the maximum weekly rates are £ 56.80 for workers aged 24 or below and £71.70 for workers aged 25 or above²⁶). However, those on a low income²⁷ who are not entitled to contribution-based JSA or who have exceeded the period of 182 days can claim income-based JSA, which provides the same amount of benefits as contribution-based JSA but it has no limit of duration. Furthermore, if a person receives income-based JSA, she is automatically entitled to a range of means-tested benefits, including maximum housing benefits, maximum Council Tax benefits, free school meals and health benefits²⁸ (Hood and Norris Keiller, 2016). Nonetheless, for both types of JSA, the person needs to abide by strict activation requirements, and by any other conditions established in the Claimant Commitment²⁹. These include: going to the jobcentre when asked, not turning down a job or a training course, taking part in an interview the claimant has been invited to, going to a booked training course, being available for work, not leaving a job or training without a good reason, actively seeking a job. The fulfillment of conditionality criteria has to be proved by coming to the jobcentre every two weeks and in case the person is found to have failed to abide any of the conditions, she can be sanctioned from a minimum of 4 weeks to a maximum of 156 weeks (GOV, 2015a).

Hence, contributions play a rather minor role in the British UB system, as requirements to access income-based UB are quite loose (Clasen and Goerne, 2011). Means-tested UB is relatively easy to access for low-income workers, including TA workers, whose household financial resources fall short of the threshold. Thus, it is not surprising that 82% of UB claimants receive income-based JSA rather than contribution-based JSA (Hood and Norris Keiller, 2016). However, the amount of benefit received for both types of UB is not generous,

²⁵ A 'new style' JSA is available for those who are entitled to apply for Universal Credit (UC). It works in the same way as contribution-based JSA (GOV.UK, 2017b). UC is currently being rolled out and it is meant to replace six benefits: income-based JSA, Housing Benefit, Working Tax Credits, Child Tax Credit, income-based Employment and Support Allowance and Income Support. UC was still in the pilot phase at the time of the interviews.

²⁶ All the amounts presented here refer to 2014, year in which the majority of interviews was carried out. There was a small increase over time, but typically not keeping up with inflation. Different rates apply to lone parents and couples.

²⁷ The person has to have less than £16000 pounds worth of savings and their partner should not work more than 24 hours per week. If the partner works more hours, other means-tested benefits are available.

²⁸ Including free dental care and sight tests.

²⁹ The Claimant Commitment is an agreement between the claimant and the jobcentre which states the activation requirements which need to be satisfied in order for the claimant to receive JSA.

as it is roughly 16% of the median income, and there are strict activation requirements which can result in tough sanctioning. However, claimants on a low income have access to a range of means-tested benefits, including housing benefits and Council Tax credits, which complement the limited amount of money received through JSA.

In Italy, the ordinary unemployment benefit was reformed by the Fornero Law 2012 (Law No. 92/2012) and it was named *ASpI – Assicurazione Sociale per l’Impiego* (Social Insurance for Employment). It was available to all employees³⁰, including TA workers (INPS, 2015a). In order to be entitled, the person had to have paid national insurance contributions for at least 2 years in her working life and at least for 1 year in the 2 years before the unemployment claim. The benefit amounted to 75% of previous earnings up to 1180 euros and 25% of the exceeding earnings. The duration of the benefit varied with age (in 2015 it was 10 months for a worker below 50 years old³¹) (INPS, 2015a). A new unemployment benefit, the *NASpI – Nuova Assicurazione Sociale per l’Impiego* (New Social Insurance for Employment), was introduced by the Jobs Act reform in 2015. Although the new benefit presents several changes as regards contributions required for access and duration, it goes beyond the scope of this thesis, which analyses the experience of workers in 2013 and 2014, before the introduction of the *NASpI*.

Another, less generous, ordinary unemployment benefit, the *mini-ASpI*, was available to employees who had not paid sufficient contributions. The person had to have paid contributions for at least 13 weeks in the year preceding the unemployment claim. The amount of benefit was calculated in the same way as for the *ASpI* but the benefit lasted for half of the weeks worked (and for which contributions had been paid) in the year before the unemployment claim (INPS, 2015b). The introduction of the *mini-ASpI* was meant to provide a form of unemployment benefit, albeit less generous, for workers with a limited contribution history. The *mini-ASpI* has also been substituted by the *NASpI* in the recent employment reform of 2015. Although in order to be entitled to unemployment benefits (both *ASpI* and *mini-ASpI*) a person had to declare her availability to work, conditionality requirements, although formally present, were not enforced in practice, as active labour market policies in Italy have never been fully rolled out or they have been implemented only patchily (Gualmini and Rizza, 2011; Jessoula and Vesan, 2011).

Furthermore, TA workers are not entitled to the two main types of benefits provided in case of unemployment, which go under the name of *CIG – Cassa Integrazione Guadagni* (Wage

³⁰ Only permanent employees in public administration are excluded.

³¹ In 2013 and 2014, it was 8 months for workers below 50 years old, while it has been kept constant at 12 months for workers 50-55 years old. Longer durations apply for workers above 55 years old. In 2015, the maximum duration was 16 months.

Guarantee Fund). These wage guarantee schemes³² are reserved mostly for permanent workers working in medium and large firms mainly in the manufacturing sector, but they are not available to most standard employees in the service sector and certainly not to temporary workers (Di Nicola, 2011). These are generous benefits both in terms of duration (lasting from 1 year to up to 4 years in specific cases³³) and income replacement (80% of previous earnings). A further benefit from which TA workers are excluded is the so-called *indennità di mobilità* (mobility benefit). The mobility benefit is available for the unemployed who have exhausted the *CIG straordinaria* and in other specific cases of firm restructuring and conversion³⁴. Again, this benefit is mostly reserved for employees of medium and large firms in the manufacturing sector, excluding *de facto* most employees in the service sector, but also employees working in small manufacturing firms.

Furthermore, there is no benefit available for workers who have not paid sufficient contributions, and no nationally provided minimum income scheme (Jessoula et al., 2011; Durazzi, 2015). In case their income falls below a certain threshold, the person can claim social assistance, but this is not very generous and it involves strict income requirements. Furthermore, social assistance is not configured as a right and it is independently administered at the municipal level and subjected to local availability of resources³⁵ (Madama, 2010).

³² There are two main types of CIG, *CIGO – Cassa Integrazione Guadagni Ordinaria* and *CIGS – Cassa Integrazione Guadagni Straordinaria* (Ordinary and Extraordinary Wage Guarantee Fund). The difference between *CIGO – Cassa Integrazione Guadagni Ordinaria* and *CIGS – Cassa Integrazione Guadagni Straordinaria* (Ordinary and Extraordinary Wage Guarantee Fund) is whether the redundancy is due to general economic downturns (CIGO) or specific firm necessities (CIGS), such as restructuring, reorganization or conversion. It is the employer that requests to use the CIG for a certain number of the employees. A third type of CIG, the *Cassa Integrazione Guadagni in Deroga* (Exceptional Wage Guarantee Fund) has been introduced after the beginning of the economic crisis in order to face the rapidly increasing unemployment. An employer can request the *CIG in deroga* if excluded from the use of CIGO and CIGS, in case her employees have exhausted CIGO or CIGS, and for categories of employees excluded from CIGO and CIGS. The main requirement is to have been continuously employed by the same employer for at least 90 days (INPS, 2015d). The *CIG in deroga* is available to TA workers although for them and for other categories of atypical workers, the benefit is only 20% of previous earnings compared to 80% of other employees (INPS, 2015e). However, the requirements necessary to access *CIG in deroga* make it a *de facto* limited option for TA workers.

³³ CIGO can last for up to 52 weeks (104 weeks in economically deprived areas). CIGS lasts up to 2 years but can be extended for 2 more years in specific cases. The CIGO is reserved for permanent and fixed-term employees (excluding managers and apprentices) in commercial, agricultural and industrial firms and cooperatives. The CIGS has a more limited application, being reserved to permanent and fixed-term employees in industrial firms with at least 15 employees, commercial firms with at least 200 employees and agricultural firms (INPS, 2015f).

³⁴ The mobility allowance can last from 12 months to up to 4 years and its amount is 100% of previous CIGS for the first 12 months and 80% afterwards (INPS, 2015g).

³⁵ There is no minimum income scheme but several income-based benefits provided at the regional and municipal level. In Bologna these include: public transport discounts, internet and phone discounts, electricity, gas and water discounts, income support schemes, family income support if the household includes at least three dependent children, subsidised pre-paid debit card (social card),

Overall, the different characteristics of the public unemployment benefit schemes in the two countries can be said to engender diverse institutional disadvantages for TA workers. The UK, through a mostly means-tested unemployment protection system, allows all unemployed people on a low income to access UBs. Having a regular working history and having paid contributions is not a relevant requirement, thus allowing TA workers to have access to public unemployment protection comparable to that of standard workers, provided they are on a low income. This, as we have seen in chapter 2, section 2.6.3, has been argued in the dualism literature to limit the divide between standard and atypical workers. Therefore, we expect a limited experienced divide in unemployment protection for TA workers in the UK. By contrast, the Italian unemployment protection system has been said to create a divide between those who have and those who have not accrued enough social insurance contributions, leaving those with limited contribution histories mostly unprotected, disproportionately affecting people with irregular employment paths.

Moreover, while in the UK, provided that the person is on a low income, a TA worker has access to a range of means-tested benefits and to activation policies, with little or no difference compared to a standard worker; in Italy, TA workers have access to generous unemployment benefits only if they satisfy contributory requirements, leaving a TA worker with a limited contribution history with limited protection and providing limited opportunities to re-enter the labour market through unenforced activation policies. These factors can further contribute to increasing the perceived divide with standard workers.

A further protection in case of unemployment can be argued to be redundancy pay, as it is provided when an employment relationship is terminated. Redundancy pay regulations differ markedly between the two countries. In Italy, redundancy pay is available to all employees from the beginning of the employment relationship and thus is also available to all TA workers (INPS, 2017d). By contrast, in the UK, redundancy pay is only available to workers who have been employed for at least two years by the same employer (GOV.UK, 2017). This means that only when TA workers have worked continuously for the same agency for over two years, do they become eligible for redundancy pay. It can be argued that here the divide depends on tenure rather than on the employment status, similarly to what we have seen for unfair dismissal.

family discounts if with at least two dependent children (family card), exemptions from health-care out-of-pocket payments, micro-credit schemes, social housing and housing benefits. Despite the long list, none of these benefits is generous, they are not integrated and they are strongly dependent on annual resource allocations (by national, regional and municipal government).

Table 5. Income protection in case of unemployment in Italy and the UK, and between standard and TA workers

	United Kingdom	Italy
Benefits available to standard workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Contribution-based UBs - Income-based UBs - Other means-tested benefits - Redundancy pay (after 2 years of employment) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Contribution-based UBs - Wage guarantee funds (only for some*) - (Limited) means-tested benefits - Redundancy pay
Benefits available to TA workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Contribution-based UBs - Income-based UBs - Other means-tested benefits - Redundancy pay (after 2 years of employment) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Contribution-based UBs - (Limited) means-tested benefits - Redundancy pay

*Mostly manufacturing workers in medium and large firms. Source: Own elaboration

4.7.2 Protection in Case of Sickness

Income protection in case of sickness differs considerably in the two countries. While in the UK the system is characterised by a basic flat-rate benefit which can be topped up by earnings-related private schemes, in Italy the system is earnings-related and it aims at preserving roughly the same income previously earned with a combination of both public and occupational benefits.

In the UK, a TA worker is entitled to receive Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) (£86.70 per week) if she has not worked for at least 4 days in a row³⁶. The worker will be entitled to SSP if she has earned at least £109 on average a week in the 8 weeks before she got sick. There is no minimum time the worker has to have worked for the employer in order to receive SSP. The employer is obliged to pay the SSP for up to 28 weeks³⁷ (GOV, 2015b). However, as already explained,

³⁶ Including non-working days.

³⁷ Different rules apply to agricultural workers.

given that TA workers are not legally employees, they are not entitled to contractual sick pay. Contractual sick pay schemes may vary considerably from employer to employer, as their provision is discretionary. Furthermore, not all employers provide occupational sickness schemes, meaning that being an employee does not necessarily mean having access to contractual sick pay. It has been calculated that around 70% of employees receive some form of occupational sick pay (Clasen, 2016).

In Italy, while statutory sick pay is regulated by law, the amount of sickness benefit actually received by a worker is also partly regulated by national sectoral collective agreements, which stipulate the complementary amount of money the employer (the agency for TA workers) has to pay. SSP is covered for all days during which the TA worker is sick (except the first 3, for which the worker continues to be paid by the agency³⁸) up to the number of days the person has worked in the year before the sick leave (with a minimum of 30 and a maximum of 180). Between the 4th and the 20th day, the worker is paid 75% of daily earnings (paid 50% by SSP and 50% by the agency), while from the 21st day onwards the person is paid 100% of previous daily earnings but 66.67% of the amount is paid from statutory benefit and the rest is paid by the agency. The same rates apply to permanent workers, the only difference lies in the duration, as the permanent worker is entitled to up to 180 days (INPS, 2015h).

As regards SSP only, Italy and the UK both provide equal treatment between TA and standard workers. Nevertheless, while in Italy SSP is earnings-related in the UK it only provides a limited flat-rate amount. However, the main difference in protection lies in the fact that TA workers are legally regarded as employees in the Italian case but not in the British one, leaving them with a different entitlement to contractual sick pay. While in Italy the agency must complement SSP with a generous occupational payment (keeping the replacement rate at 75-100% of earnings) which is equivalent to that available to standard employees, in the UK the worker is only entitled to the flat-rate SSP, as she is not legally considered an employee. Therefore, while in Italy there does not appear to be any institutional divide in protection in case of sickness compared to standard employees, in the UK an intersecting divide can be argued to exist when it comes to contractual sick pay. There is a divide between employees and workers, given that the latter are not legally entitled to contractual sick pay. There is also a second divide, dependent on employers. Only employees whose employer provides contractual sick pay can be regarded as 'insiders', while all other can be regarded as

³⁸ The worker is paid 100% of daily pay for the first two 'sickness events' in the year. For the 3rd is paid 66.6% and for the 4th only 50% of daily earnings. From the 5th onwards the worker is not paid.

‘outsiders’. Thus, in the UK, the group of insiders can be said to comprise only a sub-set of employees.

This enables me to refine the hypotheses from the dualism literature claiming that, when considering the high reliance on occupational benefits during sickness in Liberal countries, the divide in income protection compared to Southern European countries is larger. By comparing the characteristics of sick pay for TA workers in the UK and in Italy, I hypothesise that TA workers in the UK experience deeper disadvantages as they are excluded from contractual sick pay and only have access to ungenerous flat-rate SSP. Nevertheless, we have to consider that not all standard workers in the UK are ‘insiders’ when it comes to protection against sickness and that the experienced divide among TA workers might depend on whether or not the employer offers contractual sick pay schemes to its employees.

Table 6. Income protection in case of sickness in Italy and the UK, and between standard and TA workers

	United Kingdom	Italy
Benefits available to standard workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Flat-rate SSP - (Often) contractual sick pay 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Earnings-related SSP - Contractual sick pay
Benefits available to TA workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Flat-rate SSP - Contractual sick pay if the employer discretionally offers it also to TA workers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Earnings-related SSP - Contractual sick pay

Source: Own elaboration

4.7.3 Protection in Retirement

Income protection in retirement is differently structured in the two countries. In the UK, the system is characterised by a basic public benefit, which is complemented by a more generous earnings-related scheme which can be public or occupational and finally by a voluntary private scheme. In Italy, the income protection is also organised through a three-pillar system, but the contribution-based public pension plays a dominant role, as the take-up rate of occupational

and private pensions is comparatively low (Cesari et al., 2007; Natali and Stamati, 2013). TA workers in the UK can rely on the basic public pension, the earnings-related public pension and they can enroll into private schemes, but they are not entitled to occupational schemes as they are not legally regarded as employees. By contrast, TA workers in Italy rely mostly on the contribution-based public pension, while this can be topped-up by occupational and private pensions.

In the UK, the first pillar is constituted by the Basic State Pension (BSP). The BSP is a contribution-based benefit which provides flat-rate protection for wage earners. In 2015, the BSP reaches a maximum of £115.95 per week if the worker has contributed for at least 30 years³⁹ (GOV, 2015c). The second pillar is the State Second Pension (S2P) or Additional State Pension (Natali, 2012). The S2P was introduced in 2002 to substitute the previous State Earnings-Related Pension Scheme (SERPS). The S2P was meant to top up the BSP with an earnings-related component, providing additional public pension income in retirement. However, workers could decide to contract out of the scheme by either joining an occupational scheme provided by their employer or by a private additional pension plan (APP) with a stakeholder or a personal pension scheme. The latter option was discontinued in 2012 (Natali, 2012). Following a further pension reform (Pensions Act 2014), starting from April 2016, the two state components will be merged into one flat-rate state pension.

An occupational contribution-based pension may be provided by the employer. Occupational schemes can be either defined benefit or defined contribution plans. TA workers do not generally have access to occupational schemes provided by their hirers as they are not legally regarded as employees. Nevertheless, it has to be highlighted that not all employers provide occupational schemes to their employees. It has been calculated that, in 2010, 59% of all employees had access to occupational schemes (Guardiancich, 2010). Nonetheless, a recent reform in the pension system has introduced auto-enrolment in occupational pension schemes, with which all employers will automatically enrol all their workers into a workplace pension schemes (Pensions Act 2008). This will oblige agencies, as legal employers, to provide occupational pension schemes to their workers. Nevertheless, the reform is still in a phase-in period and it will be fully implemented only in 2018. The third pillar is the private one, to which workers can contribute individually on a voluntary basis. Pensioners on a low income may apply for a range of means-tested benefits⁴⁰ to complement their income (Natali, 2012).

³⁹ Lower amounts apply if the maximum amount of contribution has not been paid (GOV, 2015c).

⁴⁰ Pension Credit can be regarded the main form of income for pensioners on a low income. The benefit is meant to top up both public and private pension income. It has two components: a

Compared to the British pension system, the Italian one has been historically a single public pillar system, but the situation has started to change in the past few decades (Natali and Stamati, 2013). The public pension system is contribution-based and the generosity of the pension strictly depends on the amount of contributions paid. Several reforms have been implemented to improve the financial sustainability of the public pension system in the past two decades, including the switch from a defined benefit to a defined contribution system in 1995 (the so-called Dini reform). Nevertheless, these reforms will translate into much less generous public pension provisions for future pensioners (Jessoula, 2012).

To compensate for less generous public pension provisions, successive governments have tried to incentivise the take-up of contribution-based supplementary schemes, both occupational and private, moving the pension system from a single to a multi-pillar one (Cesari et al., 2007). Among these, there is the possibility to transfer part of the redundancy pay being accrued into funded schemes (Natali and Stamati, 2013). Nonetheless, these reforms have had only limited results, especially for temporary workers and workers in the service sector in general, where only a minor percentage of workers have opted for supplementary pension schemes (Jessoula, 2012; Natali and Stamati, 2013). Jessoula (2012) argues that only workers who have regularly contributed during all their working life to both public and supplementary schemes, who have uninterrupted careers and who have earned at least average wages, can expect to receive in the next decades pensions whose amount can guarantee adequate income protection in retirement. However, a scheme of means-tested social allowance exists for the needy elderly, meant to complement insufficient incomes in order to reach a living minimum of €516 per month for those above 70⁴¹ (INPS, 2015i) but, as we have already discussed, other means-tested benefits for people on a low income are limited.

When comparing retirement protection for pensioners on a low income in Italy and in the UK, although they both provide basic flat-rate income protection in retirement, the availability of complementary means-tested benefits in the UK, which are absent in Italy, make low-income pensioners in the British context better protected. However, TA workers in the UK do not have access to occupational schemes, making them mostly rely on the state basic pension, the state second pension or on complementary voluntary private schemes, while in Italy workers are entitled to a contributory public pension, whose strong dependence on contributions paid limits

Guarantee Credit, which is an income-based benefit, and a Savings-Credit, which is a form of inverse means-tested benefit for those who have invested into private schemes (GOV.UK, 2017d). Other means-tested benefits, such as housing benefits and Council Tax benefits are also available for pensioners on a low income.

⁴¹ €417 for those between 65 and 70 years old.

income protection for those with irregular contributions histories. Nevertheless, TA workers have access to both occupational and private schemes, similarly to standard workers.

This enables the refinement of the initial hypotheses. The hypotheses from the dualism literature state that, on the one hand, when considering public schemes only, atypical workers in Liberal countries tend to face a smaller institutional divide compared to standard workers vis-à-vis those in Southern Europe. However, when considering also private schemes, including occupational schemes, the situation is reversed. Following the analysis of the pension structure in the two countries, I hypothesise that in both countries TA workers face a disadvantage in income protection in retirement compared to standard employees. However, while in Italy the disadvantage comes from the likelihood of irregular contribution histories, in the UK it comes also from a lack of access to occupational pension schemes, in case the hirer provides any. The situation is bound to change in the future with the full implementation of the auto-enrolment system, but this will not compensate the disadvantage accrued in pension contribution in previous years.

Table 7. Income protection in retirement in Italy and the UK, and between standard and TA workers

	United Kingdom	Italy
Benefits available to standard workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Basic State Pension - State Second Pension - (Often) occupational pension - (Voluntary) private pension 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Contribution-based public pension - Occupational pension - (Voluntary) private pension
Benefits available to TA workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Basic State Pension - State Second Pension - (Voluntary) private pension 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Contribution-based public pension - Occupational pension - (Voluntary) private pension

Source: Own elaboration

4.8 Conclusion

The analysis of the institutional framework in which TAW is embedded in Italy and the UK allowed me to identify several institutional divides between TA and standard workers in the two countries. These divides can be said to broadly reflect those identified in the dualism literature for Liberal and Southern European countries and discussed in the analytical framework (see chapter 2, section 2.6). Nevertheless, some specificities of this two-country comparison have to be highlighted.

Firstly, a number of differences between Italy and the UK could be attributed to the different legal status of TA workers. In Italy, TA workers are legally defined as fixed-term employees and this entitles them to all the same employment rights as other employees. Furthermore, both national legislation and collective agreements have long established equal treatment with comparable workers, removing any form of discrimination between different categories of employees. However, in the UK, these workers have a rather ill-defined employment status, which prevents them from being entitled to some of standard workers' employment rights. Thus, it appears that the legal status of TAW can contribute to shaping a divide between standard and TA workers, which goes beyond the standard vs. atypical dichotomy discussed in the dualism literature. Legislative reforms following European directives have contributed to reducing the divide between standard and TA workers' rights, but important forms of discrimination still persist, including a delayed access of 12 weeks to equal pay and equal working time. Moreover, a number of rights and entitlements in the UK are dependent on tenure. Workers can only claim redundancy pay or unfair dismissal after 2 years of continuous employment. This disproportionately affects workers in short-term jobs, including TA workers.

Furthermore, collective representation for TA workers can be said to be more limited in the UK compared to Italy though this partly reflects a more limited role of collective bargaining in the British context in general. However, union federations representing TA workers in Italy can be argued to have a more limited voice in bargaining practices compared to union federations representing workers in a specific sector, possibly allowing for a greater divide in collective representation between standard and TA workers in Italy than in the UK. Therefore, it is not clear in which of the two countries TA workers might experience a deeper disadvantage.

Finally, when it comes to income protection, the countries broadly reflect the characteristics of their respective welfare regimes. In Italy, divides can be said to be predominantly dependent on the workers' contribution history. In the UK, the legal employment status of TAW appears to play an important role in shaping the divide with standard workers, as it does not allow TA

workers to access occupational schemes. Nevertheless, the status of ‘insider’ also strongly depends on the employer’s provision of occupational schemes, as not all standard employees have access to them. Therefore, in the UK, there appears to be two intersecting divides, one based on the employment status and the other based on employers’ provisions.

5. Employment Experience

5.1 Introduction

This first empirical chapter compares the experience of TA workers in the two countries as regards employment. Firstly, I describe their employment experience in terms of the typical employment paths these workers follow. As we will see, two main paths have been identified, one of which was only present in the Italian context. These two employment paths, which I have labelled ‘precariously unstable’ and ‘precariously stable’, present very different characteristics and these in turn affect the experience of the workers in radically different ways, not just within the employment dimension but also in the work and the income protection dimension, as will be discussed in the following chapters. Secondly, I explore the role TAW has along those paths, and how this is affected by the opportunities and constraints offered by the employment regulation frameworks. Four main roles can be identified but with partly different characteristics and prevalence in the two countries: stepping stone into atypical employment, stepping stone into standard employment, trap in a cycle of employment-unemployment, trap in temporary employment. In two of those roles, namely stepping stone into standard employment and trap in temporary employment, the different employment regulation frameworks appear to shape the possibility of transitions into standard employment, with Italian workers finding it more difficult to move into standard employment compared to the British workers. Nonetheless, for the other two roles, no systematic difference was found between the two countries, with similar stepping stone and trap effects both in Italy and in the UK.

After discussing the role of TAW in the transitions between employment statuses, the analysis focuses on the experience of TA workers from a static perspective. Here I discuss the disadvantages associated with being a TA worker, in terms of employment precariousness. As will become clear, the experience varies depending on the employment path followed by the workers, rather than on the country. The ‘precariously unstable’ face similar disadvantages in the two countries, while the ‘precariously stable’, only found in Italy, experience partly different disadvantages. Finally, I discuss the role of public employment services as an alternative to TAs in employment. Workers in both countries made no use of public employment services, preferring to look for jobs independently or through TAs. Despite this similar experience, the reasons for this lack of use is caused by a very different perception of public employment services in Italy and the UK, which can be traced back to the different organisation of these services in the two countries.

The chapter is organised as follows. Section 5.2 analyses the workers' employment paths, the 'precariously unstable' path (section 5.2.1) and the 'precariously stable' one (section 5.2.2). Section 5.3 considers the role TAW worked played in the workers' paths. More specifically, section 5.3.1 focuses on the role of TAW as a stepping stone into employment, section 5.3.2 shows the role of TAW as a stepping stone into standard employment and section 5.3.3 analyses the role of TAW as a trap in a cycle of employment-unemployment. Section 5.3.4 investigates TAW as a trap in temporary employment. For each of these roles, the experience of interviewees is compared across the two countries. Section 5.4 analyses in detail the workers' individual disadvantages in terms of employment precariousness. Section 5.5 considers the perceived role of public employment services. Finally, section 5.6 draws the conclusions.

5.2 Employment Paths

Being a TA worker did not generally represent the only experience of employment in the life of the interviewees. Interviewees had often done several jobs throughout their working life, both temporary and open-ended. Even within temporary jobs, TAW was seldom the only type of contract workers faced. Therefore, in order to fully grasp their experience as well as the disadvantages it entailed, we have to first consider TAW within the interviewees' wider employment history, and the role TAW played along their employment paths. In both the Italian and the British case, workers may have experienced several types of temporary contracts besides TAW. More specifically, in the British case, they may have been employed as directly-hired temporary workers or through zero-hour contracts, while in the Italian case they might have worked as directly hired temporary workers, through a cooperative or as *parasubordinati*, as we will see in detail in the following sections. It is worth mentioning that informal work was rare in both countries, although it was more common in the Italian case, as expected from secondary literature (Matsaganis et al., 2003; Prosser, 2016). However, none of the interviewees in either case had ever been employed in an informal job on a full-time basis. Informal jobs were generally used in periods of part-time employment or, when in very low-paid jobs, to top up earnings, but they were never the main source of income aside from one case.

Having more than one job at the same time was not common, especially when already in a full-time contract. In this case, complementary jobs for a few hours a week were taken in order to supplement income. Instead, more common was the situation in which a worker had been doing more than one part-time job at the same time. In these situations, generally two or three

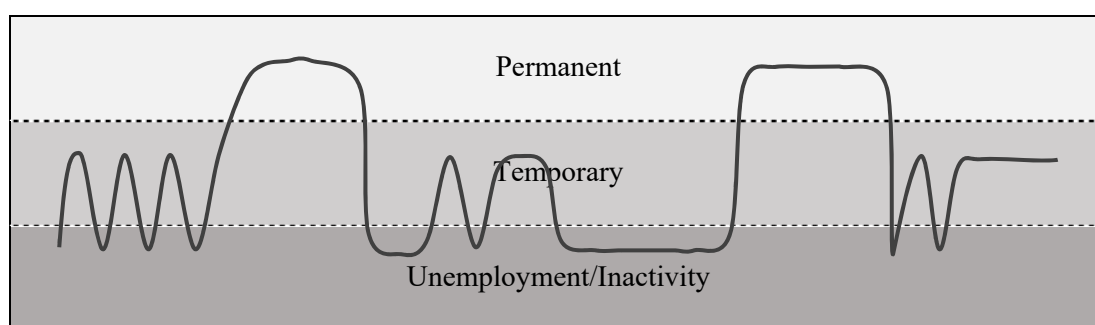
different jobs were done weekly, though in one case six jobs were taken, on different assignments and on a mostly temporary basis. Thus, working full-time does not have to necessarily be equated with having a full-time contract, as several part-time jobs might be done in the same week to reach a full-time equivalent.

Despite these idiosyncratic differences, two main employment paths could be identified within the sample. In the first one, which I called the ‘precariously unstable’, workers moved between different jobs, mostly temporary, but in some cases also permanent, generally alternating with periods of inactivity or, more commonly, unemployment. In the second group, which I called the ‘precariously stable’, workers stayed in the same job on a temporary contract for a long period of time, but they were never able to secure a permanent position. In the following subsections, I describe in detail these two employment paths as they are important for understanding the experience of interviewees and the types of disadvantage they faced. I will refer to these two groups of workers throughout the empirical analysis where significant differences have been identified in the disadvantages faced.

5.2.1 The ‘Precariously Unstable’

In the first type of employment path, which was found in both countries, workers experienced several changes of employment status within their employment history. They might have been employed in temporary assignments, a few months or several years apart, experiencing unemployment (or inactivity) in between different employment contracts. Some of them might have been employed on one or more permanent contracts for up to several years, before moving back to temporary employment. These ‘precariously unstable’ workers followed an employment path similar to the one illustrated in Figure 1, moving in and out of employment on an irregular basis, although not all of them managed to ever experience permanent employment.

Figure 3. The ‘Precariously Unstable’ Employment Path

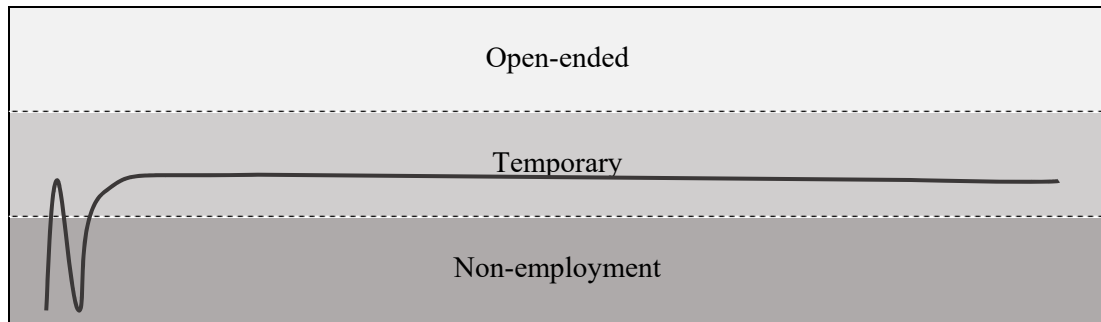


The length of employment as well as unemployment and inactivity periods varied greatly both between individuals and within the same individual across time. Periods of employment might have lasted from a few hours for a one-off assignment to a few decades for a permanent job. Even when just considering TAW, a large variation in the duration of employment spells applies, as assignments might have lasted from a few hours to several months, or many years, as we will see specifically for some interviewees in the Italian case. Also unemployment spells varied widely. Sometimes unemployment lasted just a day or two if the individual was able to secure another job straight away. At other times, several months or even years passed before the individual was able to find another job. Periods of inactivity, which tended to be rarer than unemployment, lasted on average longer than periods of unemployment, as sickness, training, education, relocation and caring responsibilities took longer periods of time and lasted from a few days (in the case of short-term sickness or an intense training course) to many years (e.g. long-term sickness or long-term caring responsibilities). These ‘precariously unstable’ workers constituted the majority of interviewees in the sample. More interestingly for the comparative analysis, all workers in the UK belonged to this group, while in Italy they were the majority of interviewees. I will return to this relevant comparative difference later in the chapter.

5.2.2 The ‘Precariously Stable’

The second type of employment path could only be identified in the Italian case. Workers following this employment path presented a very regular employment history compared to the previous group, being employed in the same job for a long time, and they rarely, if ever, experienced periods of unemployment (or inactivity) (see Figure 2). However, workers in this group were unable to secure a permanent contract even after years of employment in the same job, always being employed on temporary contracts. As we will see in more detail later in this chapter, within this employment path, TAW generally constituted only one of several types of atypical employment contracts these workers had.

Figure 4. The ‘Precariously Stable’ Employment Path



5.3 Role of TAW in the Workers' Employment Paths

The role TAW had along workers' employment paths was dependent on the reasons of clients for hiring those workers, in line with what already been argued in the literature (see, for instance, Debels, 2005; Mitlacher, 2007). The main uses clients make of TAW have been identified in chapter 4 section 4.2. From the empirical analysis, I could identify several roles TAW played along the interviewees' employment paths, depending on the type of use clients made of it: stepping stone into atypical employment, stepping stone into standard employment, trap in a cycle of employment-unemployment and trap in temporary employment. Given that my empirical analysis did not entail interviews with actual clients, I cannot affirm with utter certainty the actual reasons behind clients' use of TAW. However, triangulation between workers, temporary agency staff and unions allowed me to identify four roles.

As is shown below, for two of those roles the different employment regulations were an important factor in providing different opportunities for transition into standard employment. More specifically, in the Italian case, the fact that TAW was used as a substitute for standard employment delayed the possibility of transition to standard employment, in certain cases even for several years, while in the UK it did not appear to be the case. Nevertheless, for the other two roles, TAW was experienced similarly in the two countries, regardless of the different employment regulation frameworks. The findings only partly confirmed hypotheses from the analytical framework, which expected workers to feel more trapped in atypical employment in Southern Europe than in Liberal countries. Although this is overall true, given that TA workers in Italy found it more difficult to move to standard employment even after years in the same job, the empirical analysis provides a more complex picture.

Firstly, we need to consider that, no matter the reasons for hiring, TAW had an important stepping-stone function: that of moving people from unemployment to employment. If a person, who would otherwise be unemployed, was able to find a job through a temporary agency, then TAW can be said to have had a stepping stone effect along that person's employment path, regardless of the possibilities of future stabilisation. Nevertheless, the movement into employment might be very short-term and the person might experience repeated spells of unemployment in between assignments. The experience of these workers was similar in both countries, showing that, regardless of the employment regulation frameworks, TAW can be argued to reduce the divide with standard workers, helping the unemployed re-enter employment, albeit on a temporary basis.

When clients used TAW as a screening tool, TAW functioned as a stepping stone into standard employment, as workers were recruited with the purpose of testing their ability to work, their effort, commitment and all other aspects which were relevant for a job but could not be known in advance. Within this context, the worker also had the chance to try out a job and assess whether it fulfilled her demands, interests and expectations. Should the matching be successful, the temporary employment relationship was transformed into a standard one. As we will see, a few of these cases were found in the two case studies. However, despite similarities, we can trace differences between the two countries, which are mostly related to the amount of time needed and the probability that the temporary assignment was turned into a more stable position. The experience of these workers is in line with hypotheses from the dualisation literature showing that TA workers in Italy experience more difficulties than TA workers in the UK in moving from atypical to standard employment (e.g. Alboni et al. 2008; Barbieri and Scherer, 2009; Leschke, 2009).

When TAW was used as a buffer against the volatility of labour demand and supply, TAW functioned as a trap in a cycle of employment and unemployment. Workers did not have the opportunity to reach a more stable employment position, as they were constantly moving from one job to another, without opportunities for stabilisation. In those cases, the different employment regulation frameworks did not appear to influence their experience in systematically different ways, in contrast to the hypothesis that TA workers in Italy feel more trapped in temporary employment compared to their British counterparts. In both countries, workers felt unable to have any job continuity and to develop any career path. As we will see later on (see section 5.4.1), they were also the ones experiencing the worst disadvantages in terms of employment precariousness.

Finally, where TAW was used by clients as a substitute for standard employment, TAW functioned as a trap in atypical employment for the workers. Here, the hirer did not have an interest in making the employment relationship permanent, as TAW was used as a more convenient alternative to standard employment. Therefore, the workers were kept in temporary employment as long as legally possible. These cases were only found in Italy, confirming hypotheses from the dualism literature, which expect a situation of ‘trap’ to be more widespread and entrenched in Italy (Alboni et al. 2008; Barbieri and Scherer, 2009). These workers can be said to epitomise the employment segmentation of Southern European labour markets, as workers were unable to reach stable employment even after years in the same job. As we will see later on in the chapter (see section 5.4.2), their experience of precariousness was still very different from the previous groups, highlighting how the employment regulation framework affects their experience by creating specific disadvantages.

The close connection between the type of clients’ use of TAW, possibilities of transition and resulting employment paths may now seem clear. The ‘precariously unstable’ generally experienced TAW in many different roles, being sometimes a stepping stone into employment, regardless of the reasons for hiring, or a stepping stone into permanent employment when clients hired them to screen future employees. At other times, it was a trap in a cycle of employment-unemployment when workers hired them as buffer in case of labour shortages. Certainly, when hirers are screening for future employees, they might pick from previous TA workers used as buffers (Debels, 2005). However, in all cases the workers had to go through a new trial period on a temporary contract, limiting the stepping stone effect of previous employment experiences with that hirer. By contrast, the ‘precariously stable’ experienced TAW only as a trap, as clients used TAW as a substitute for standard employment. The next few sections will analyse in detail the experience of TA workers in each of these cases.

The different roles TAW played along the interviewees’ employment paths and its close association with the clients’ reasons for use of TAW are summarised in Table 8. As is shown, just by considering the sheer number of cases, the role played by TAW presents both similarities and differences between the two countries. On the one hand, the roles of TAW as a stepping stone into employment and stepping stone into unemployment were remarkably frequent in both countries, partly due to the fact that individuals might have been employed on several short-term TA assignments. On the other hand, the role of TAW as a stepping stone into standard employment was more common in the British case, while the role of TAW as a trap in temporary employment was only present in the Italian case.

Table 8. Employment Transitions and Role of TAW

Change in employment status	Hirers' use of TAW	Role of TAW	N. of cases*	
			UK	IT
Unemployment ↓ Temporary emp.	Any	Stepping stone	18	19
Temporary emp. ↓ Standard emp.	Screening tool	Stepping stone	5	2
Temporary emp. ↓ Unemployment	Buffer	Trap	15	20
Temporary emp. ↓ Temporary emp.	Cost reduction	Trap	0	6

Own elaboration. *The number of cases does not equal the number of interviewees as some interviewees might have experienced TAW in multiple roles

5.3.1 TAW as a Stepping Stone into Employment

In both countries, regardless of the reasons why the clients hired the worker, TAW played an important role in the interviewee's life, that of a gateway from unemployment to employment. In those cases, TAW was perceived as an important tool for entering or re-entering the labour market after a period of unemployment or inactivity, and it was experienced similarly in the two countries. Temporary agencies were considered the fastest and easiest way to match labour demand and supply and many interviewees in both countries thought most clients nowadays mostly rely on temporary agencies to find suitable employees rather than searching and selecting themselves. This finding is in line with the important gateway role of temporary agencies for the unemployed previously identified by some authors, for instance Gray (2002), who analysed the perceptions among formerly unemployed TA workers in the UK, or Fidan Elciogu (2010), who investigated TAW in the US labour market.

As Paolo⁴², 36, claimed, '*Finding a job by bringing your CV to the firm is simply very difficult, I tried, but with no results*' or Marco, 31, who said, '*Trying to find a job on your own is very difficult, as most firms nowadays recruit people through temporary agencies*'. Employers were

⁴² All names have been changed. I have used common names in each national context to preserve the interviewees' anonymity.

thought to often ignore individual applications and to rely on external agencies for an initial selection of workers, at least for temporary positions. Thus, it can be argued that TAW was perceived by interviewees as an effective tool in searching for jobs, providing employment opportunities that would have been difficult to reach otherwise and a bridge between unemployment and employment.

The ease of finding employment through a TA was interpreted partly based on the fact that the TA was acting as a powerful selecting mechanism of suitable candidates. Hence, once the agency had found a job match and the person had been invited to a job interview, the likelihood of being hired was perceived as higher than it would have been by an independent invitation by the employer. As Francesca, 41, clearly explained, *'The TA is a sort of business card, where the hirer, this is my impression, the hirer feels safer and he hires you'*. Besides being perceived as the preferred initial selection tool by many employers, temporary agencies were perceived as having access to relevant information, including job offers and open positions, that would not be available otherwise, or they would be difficult to find individually. *'[TAs] are the easiest way to find a job, they have access to offers you would never find on your own'* (Maria, 30). *'I sent CVs to more than 30 employers but never heard back! [With the TAs] you get a job quicker!'* (Stewart). Thus, a temporary agency was similarly perceived in both countries as an important information broker in the labour market, both for clients and candidates, and this role facilitated transitions into employment for seven interviewees in each country. In those cases, we can see that TAW may serve the purpose of improving job matching within the labour market, helping people finding a job, albeit temporary, while providing clients with suitable candidates, therefore reducing costs for both clients and candidates. This function was also highlighted by Katrina, the manager of a small agency:

It's quick and efficient. They [the clients] do not have to employ on a permanent basis to have additional help to cover sickness, holiday vacancy [...]. They [the unemployed] need their confidence to keep going, to believe in themselves, to have some self-worth. They also need money.

Both in Italy and in the UK, the fact that TAW allowed some workers to exit unemployment was experienced as a great advantage. *'TAW is definitely better than no job. It's not great, but at least it is a job'* (Paolo). *'TAW brought me out of unemployment, this is not little [help]'* (Francesca). *'They helped me find a job. That was great!'* (Chris, 30). *'It gets you a job, that's the important thing!'* (Stewart). For those workers, TAW was experienced as a tool for exiting a situation of severe disadvantage, providing at least a source of income and the opportunity to work rather than being unemployed.

It can be argued that in those situations, TAW was perceived as a way to reduce the divide with standard workers, bringing the person from a state of unemployment to a state of employment, albeit temporary. This is in line with what has previously been highlighted by other authors studying transitions in and out of atypical employment (Gray, 2002; Gash, 2005; Scherer, 2005), who have argued that TAW may be seen as a way to reduce the employment divide between standard workers and the unemployed, helping the unemployed re-entering the labour market. No systematic difference could be identified between workers in Italy and in the UK, suggesting that the role of TAW in reducing the divide was the same in both countries. The employment regulation framework did not appear to influence the experience of these workers. Therefore, it can be said that, when it comes to the transition from unemployment to temporary employment, TAW was experienced similarly in the two countries and in both cases it was seen as a stepping stone into employment.

Nevertheless, although TAW was experienced as a tool for getting closer to the labour market, it was hardly ever conceived of as the final step. In fact, as we can see from the quotations above, this was not generally the employment status of choice but rather the only choice when no other option was available. This is in line with quantitative studies both in Italy and in the UK, which found the majority of adult temporary workers to be involuntarily employed on a temporary contract (Alboni et al., 2008; Di Nicola, 2011; Green and Livanos, 2015). As will be explained in more detail in section 5.4, TAW was not enough to make people feel fully integrated into the labour market, as almost all of them (with one important exception) were looking to become standard employees at some point, when the opportunity would become available.

Despite the important job-matching function of temporary agencies, workers sometimes complained about the criteria used for job matching, and the sometimes poor matching outputs that it produced. For instance, the selection and matching for jobs were sometimes felt to be inaccurate and not well thought out. For instance, Francesca, who also worked as a temporary agency staff member, criticised the way in which the matching was sometimes made.

They are busy, you know, they do not have time to look through all the CVs they have, to find the most suitable candidate. If they receive a call [from a client] who needs a cashier, the first person that enters the agency, they'll ask: Do you wanna be a cashier? That's how it goes. It's not their fault, it's just the way it works.

The situation was similar in the British case, as explained by Tom, 31: *'I didn't even have an interview for this temp job, I didn't have an interview, they didn't even need to interview me – it was like, yeah, take him.'* Although one might argue that job matching was not carefully selected in some cases, another interpretation could be that for many jobs provided by agencies

almost any candidate would be ‘good enough’ and it was not in the interest of either the client or the agency to spend resources on a more careful matching, this being at the expenses of the TA workers themselves. Although job offers could potentially be turned down by the candidate, the job description provided by the agency was often not detailed enough to distinguish between suitable and unsuitable activities.

Thus, the asymmetry of information between the agency and the candidate was perceived as detrimental to the candidate, who felt forced to accept job offers with little knowledge of the duties involved. The interest of the agency was perceived as that of filling as many job positions as possible in order to receive agency fees, with little care for the preferences of the candidate. This contributed to the sense of feeling like a ‘number’, which was often mentioned by interviewees. This reflects findings from some authors in the precariousness literature, who highlighted that some of these workers felt like a commodity and not valued for the work they do (e.g. Rogers, 1995; Magatti and Fullin, 2002; Fidan Elciogu, 2010). As we will see in more detail in section 5.3.3, this contributed in certain cases to a perception of exploitation and of not being valued as a worker, further enhancing the willingness to find a permanent position.

To conclude, in both countries TAW was perceived by a number of interviewees as a useful stepping stone from unemployment to employment, increasing the opportunities for the individual to find a job and providing access to job offers which were perceived as difficult to reach otherwise. This job-matching function was recognised and appreciated by many interviewees, despite the fact that some, as we have seen, criticised the methods and the criteria with which the matching was sometimes made. This brings us back to a consideration made by a number of authors (e.g. Gash, 2005; Scherer, 2005), that in analysing disadvantages in atypical employment we always have to consider the opportunity atypical employment might offer in exiting a situation which may be of even greater disadvantage – that of unemployment. Only by including a consideration of their previous experience of unemployment, can we fully understand the experience of atypical workers and the perception of their position within the labour market. For some of these workers, the alternative perceived experience was that of unemployment rather than standard employment.

Thus, TAW was perceived as a tool for reducing the employment divide with standard employment, moving from a state of unemployment to a state of temporary employment. Within this context, the different institutional configurations in the two countries did not seem to shape the experience in systematically different ways, showing that, in both countries, TAW was experienced as a way to reduce the divide with standard workers. In that respect, it can be argued that, regardless of the employment regulation frameworks, TAW was experienced by

interviewees as the most effective tool in re-entering the labour market given that, as we have seen, the individual job search was considered a less attractive option and, as we will see in section 5.5, public employment services were not regarded as a suitable alternative. Nevertheless, TAW was not perceived as the final step into employment. All but one interviewee looked to become a standard employee sooner or later.

5.3.2 TAW as a Stepping Stone into Standard Employment

For seven interviewees in the UK and four in Italy, TAW was experienced as a gateway into standard employment. People were employed as temporary workers from a few months to a few years before being employed on a permanent basis. A positive advantage recognised by these interviewees in both countries was the possibility to try a job without the commitment associated with a permanent contract. As Marco said, *'You are constrained only temporarily so if you do not like the job, or when the assignment is finished you'd rather not continue, because it is not your cup of tea, you can!'*. Or Susanne, 38, who explained: *'I thought, well, I'll try it out, because I wouldn't want to do something, commit myself to something unless it was right, so then that's why I went to the temp agency'*. In these situations, TAW was perceived as a tool for smoothening job matching, facilitating job trials. This is in line with an argument brought forward by some scholars (see for instance, Feldman et al., 1995; Marler et al., 2002) who have argued that flexibility might also be an advantage for some workers, as they can try different jobs, without committing to any.

Furthermore, several interviewees, even those who had not experienced TAW as a stepping stone, recognised the right of the firm to see what workers are like, to test their degree of commitment, skills and effort, and thus to screen them before eventually making them permanent. *'At the beginning, you know, the firm tries to test you, you have the first 3 months as a trial period...they see how you do, they have an idea of how you work'* (Fabio, 44). *'A lot of places now will be like, your contract's for 6 months and if we don't like what you've done after 6 months, that's you gone, type of thing'* (Andrew, 30). Therefore, interviewees perceived the role of TAW as a mechanism to reduce information asymmetries between the parts and as an effective way to promote job matching for future permanent hiring. As we will see later in chapter 6, section 6.2.1, the idea of being 'on a trial' also played an important role in the British context when it comes to experiencing lower pay compared to standard workers in the same job position.

However, despite similarities in the case studies in the perception of the role of TAW, the transition from TAW to standard employment was experienced as easier and faster in the UK. More interviewees in the British case compared to the Italian case managed to secure a more stable contract with the same client after a few months of temping, either through a permanent or through a (directly hired) temporary contract. In the latter case, the new contract duration was generally much longer than it would have been under a TA assignment, therefore providing a form of more stable employment compared to TAW. As Bryan, 35, who experienced stabilisation after some of his assignments, said:

After 2 weeks of me being there on a temporary contract, they asked if I would change from being on a temporary contract with [the agency] to being on a short-term working contract with [the client]. So that meant that they would have to pay off [the agency], as a finder's fee, but then they would be paying me directly and they would be able to pay me more.

Or Lucy, 46:

Yeah, I was temping for here nearly a year before I got it made into [a job]. It was like I got the job permanently. And then I had temped with [an agency] for 6 weeks at the [client] and the [client] did not like paying [the agency] the amount of money that they did.

It was not possible to provide a systematic comparison of the agency fees in the two countries, both in terms of mark ups on hourly pay and as regards finder's fees, as these are negotiated privately between agencies and hirers and they vary greatly among agencies, types of workers, occupations and clients. Nevertheless, from the interviews to both workers and other relevant stakeholders, no systematic difference could be identified between Italy and the UK.

In the UK, clients did not find it convenient to have to pay agency fees and, after having 'tried out' a worker by renewing a few assignments, would they find the worker suitable, they tended to employ the person directly either through a permanent or through a (longer) temporary contract. This was confirmed by Katrina, the manager of a TA: *'it is an expense for the client. It's more expensive'*. Therefore, the employment regulation framework in the British context did not create any institutional barrier to hiring workers directly and for permanent positions, while the costs associated with TAW appeared to encourage hirers to quickly hire the worker directly, should the match be successful.

By contrast, in the Italian case, it seemed to be a common practice for a hirer to delay the hiring of workers on a permanent basis for as long as possible. Therefore, TA workers might have spent even a few years as temporary workers before being made permanent, sometimes changing several contracts before being able to get a permanent one. As Marco stated:

My colleagues kept asking me: are you still not permanent? You have been here for so long! [...] I had to be one year, actually one year and a half, with a temporary agency, then another year [directly hired] temporary, then another six months [directly hired] temporary, before they made me permanent!

Marco's story was not an exception. Two other workers saw their opportunity to achieve permanent employment constantly delayed.. Firms seemed to avoid hiring workers on a permanent basis as long as legal constraints allowed for this, keeping the worker in temporary employment as long as legally possible. Therefore, in the Italian context, it appears that employers use TAW also a substitute for standard employment. This contributed to lengthening the experience of temporary employment even when hirers subsequently decided to hire the worker permanently, lengthening and making more uncertain the stepping stone effect of TAW.

Overall, when comparing Italy and the UK, in both cases TAW was perceived by some interviewees as a stepping stone into standard employment. Interviewees in both countries recognised the role of TAW, on the one hand, as a tool for them to assess how the job would fit them before making a longer-term employment commitment while, on the other hand, a tool for hirers to evaluate suitable candidates for long-term positions. In that respect, it can be argued that TAW contributed to reducing the divide with standard workers in the long run, helping a number of interviewees access permanent employment. However, important differences were present in the two countries, which are in line with expectations from the dualism literature, that see transitions from atypical to standard employment as more difficult in Southern European labour markets compared with Liberal labour markets (Booth et al., 2002; Güell and Petrongolo, 2005; Muffels and Luijkx, 2008; Barbieri and Scherer, 2009; Leschke, 2009). In the UK, hirers tended not to find TAW a convenient option, reducing the time of use of TAW as much as possible. However, in the Italian case, hirers tended to delay direct hiring and especially permanent hiring. The role played by the employment regulations meant for TA workers that transitions to more stable employment were experienced as easier and faster in the British context compared to the Italian one, providing a better stepping stone in the former. Thus, even in the minority of cases where the stepping stone effect was present, workers in Italy experienced delayed and more uncertain prospects of stabilisation.

A complementary explanation might be found in the fact that the British and the Italian economies were at different points in the economic cycle at the time of the interviews, with Italy still facing recession, while the UK was already recovering from the economic crisis. This might have affected the willingness of employers to hire workers permanently given the dire economic situation. Nevertheless, this cannot be the main explanation. In fact, some of

these situations refer to either the years before the crisis or those immediately after, when the strain on employment demand was still not high and roughly comparable between the two countries. Thus, the economic crisis may have aggravated a situation which was already present in the Italian context, rather than causing it.

5.3.3 TAW and the Employment-Unemployment Trap

For the majority of interviewees in both countries, TAW did not represent a first step towards more stable employment but rather a trap in a cycle of temporary employment and unemployment. People experiencing this employment-unemployment cycle moved in and out of work quite frequently. TAW was thus intertwined with periods of unemployment and other temporary, generally short-term, employment experiences. Here, I quote the examples of Francesca and Bryan, which illustrate these very irregular employment paths. As Francesca described her employment experience:

With the [agency 1] I was under [client 1] and then the employer wanted to reduce the staff and they couldn't hire me, but I spent there almost a year. And then with [agency 2] I was at [client 2] for about a year and then with [agency 3] at [client 3] but only for a few months [...] Then I was in the summer period employed with [agency 4] at [client 4] as a holiday substitution for 3 months... And after that in October I was at [client 5] with [agency 5] but there I left the job very soon as they were soon firing all TA workers and by that time I had found a job with [agency] for the client where I am right now.

Or Bryan who said:

So December 2012 to January 2013 I worked at [client 1] - that was covering for someone who was off work ill, so he came back to work, and so they didn't need me anymore, so I found a job at a different agency for [client 2]. That was for 2 weeks because I got a phone call from the previous agency saying that they wanted me back at [client 1]. The guy was off ill again – would I come back? – And I spoke to the Chief Executive at [client 2] and he said that there would not be any permanent opportunities for me at [client 2]. [...] Then I went back to [client 1] and that was for a month, a month and a half [...] and then the guy came back again, so they didn't need me anymore, but what they did say was that if the guy left [client 1] then they would not be looking to employ someone full-time to replace him – the job wouldn't be there for me permanently.

These continuous changes of employment were due to the fact many TA jobs in both countries were not meant to become permanent but just to provide the clients with more flexibility in labour use. The client might not be looking for permanent employees, but it might just need workers to cover permanent staff temporarily not available (as in Bryan's case) or it might need workers for a brief period or for a specific activity, lasting from a few hours to several months (as in Francesca's case). This use of TAW is the one welcomed by advocates of labour

flexibilisation (e.g. Esping-Andersen and Regini, 2001; Boeri and Garibaldi, 2007) who argue that temporary work arrangements can help employers adapt to fluctuations in labour demand and supply. Many TA positions interviewees held were meant to provide short and medium-term workforce in case, on the one hand, labour supply decreased or as regular employees were sick, on parental leave or on annual leave or, on the other hand, when labour demand temporarily increased as work was needed for specific irregular activities (such as shop assisting during holiday periods), short-term projects (e.g. clearing an archive) or for one-off events (such as catering for an event).

In those cases, the role of TAW was experienced as a trap in a cycle of employment-unemployment, as workers did not feel able to secure a more stable position, and they felt stuck in repeated spells of unemployment in between relatively short-lived temporary jobs. Nevertheless, their temporary assignments were not perceived necessarily as unfair, as they recognised the employers' need to cover for temporary labour shortages. However, in the case of very short assignments, lasting from a few hours to a few days, sometimes their perception was that of being completely disposable, at the clients' needs' mercy, without being able to experience any job continuity. As Giulia, 41, explained:

They called me to stand in for a worker for a day [...] Then, they kept recalling me each time for a day or maybe two. At that point I said that I wouldn't do it, basta! I said they would either call me for longer substitutions but I wouldn't go just for a day. I don't think it was fair towards me, this is not a job! I was a stopgap, I was not recognised as a worker.

In both countries, although not all workers in that situation felt necessarily 'used' or 'exploited' by the client or by the agency, they found it very difficult to cope with continuous job changes, sometimes even doing several different jobs on the same week, or even on the same day. Moreover, they felt disempowered in their ability to influence their career, although most of them, unlike Giulia, were constrained to accept any job offer in order to earn money. In these situations, workers complained of a feeling of being treated like 'numbers' by agencies, without any interest in what they required but purely catering to clients' needs.

In conclusion, the majority of interviewees in both countries, TAW was experienced as a trap in an employment-unemployment cycle. This cycle appears to be due to the hirers' necessity of having a flexible 'buffer' of workers to rapidly adjust the labour force in case of labour shortages, without commitment to any long-term employment relationship. In these situations, workers had little or no chance of becoming permanent. This is in line with what has been highlighted by several authors in the precariousness literature (Pocock et al., 2005; Altieri, 2009; Schildrick et al., 2012), showing atypical workers often trapped in a cycle of short-term

contracts and unemployment, for reasons of flexibility on the side of employers. This constituted what can be argued to be a divide between atypical and standard workers, with no opportunities of stabilisation for even very long periods. However, they did not perceive this divide as necessarily unfair, although for some of those employed in very short-term assignments there was a common perception of being disposable.

The experience of a divide was similar in the two countries. The different employment regulation frameworks did not influence the experience of these workers in systematically different ways, as the behaviour of hirers was the same. Therefore, we can argue that, in those cases, the different employment regulations in the two countries did not affect the possibilities of transition from TAW to standard employment, as TAW was similarly experienced as a 'trap' in both countries. This is in contrast to the hypothesis formulated in the analytical framework that atypical workers feel more trapped in Southern European countries than in Liberal countries. The findings clearly show the existence of a group of workers who feel similarly 'trapped' in atypical employment and whose situation does not appear to be affected by the different employment regulation frameworks. Thus, deregulated labour markets such as those in Liberal countries may be said to engender similar trap effects in atypical employment to Southern European labour markets, when employers are only using TA workers as buffers for labour shortages.

5.3.4 TAW as a Trap in Temporary Employment

In this category, we can find all the workers with a 'precariously stable' employment path, identified only in the Italian case. The experience of these six workers can be said to epitomise the concept of labour market dualism, where a group of workers is continuously unable to reach a more stable form of employment, even after years with the same hirer. However, their experience presented quite different characteristics from the ones already analysed. Although they had many temporary employment contracts throughout their career, their job position was stable, given that sometimes they had worked in the same occupation for several years, sometimes for more than a decade. Notwithstanding their long-term employment experience in the same job, they had not been able to secure a permanent position and it was unlikely that they would be made permanent in the future, at least in the medium term.

As Rosanna, 44, explained: *'I have worked here for more than ten years now, with several different contracts. In December my contract expires once again, and I know it will probably be renewed, but I cannot be sure. It is frustrating'*. This situation was particularly severe in

the public sector where opportunities of employment stabilisation are highly restricted by *concorsi pubblici* (public competitions through exams to fill a number of permanent positions in the public sector). As Elisa, 52, said, *'Every now and then, they did these [concorsi pubblici] to allow some workers to become permanent, but they were simply not enough to absorb us all [TA workers]'*. Although these exams were organised with the objective of stabilising a share of the employees, generally only a minority of temporary workers were promoted. Moreover, they were run on an irregular basis and at a long temporal distance from each other, thus not allowing the worker any possibility to plan a career.

Although the most extreme situations were only found in the public sector, where hiring procedures are strictly regulated by law, some examples could be found also in the private sector, particularly in medium and large firms, where employment protection for regular workers are quite strict. Workers may have changed employment contract frequently, without changing their actual job. Given the tight regulations and the limitations on the duration of most temporary contracts in the Italian labour market, employers kept renewing the same temporary contract as long as legally possible, then switching to a different type of employment contract, although the person kept working in the same job. This was in order to circumvent legislation limiting the overall duration of a temporary contract with the same employer. Indeed, both the Biagi law of 2003 and the Fornero law of 2012 set time limitations on the use of TAW, as TA contracts cannot last for more than 36 months including renewals⁴³ which is the same legal maximum duration of any temporary contract, after which the contract has to become permanent. Nonetheless, flaws in the legislation allow the possibility to let a temporary contract expire and afterwards to re-hire a worker on a different type of temporary contract, and to consequently restart the countdown of the time limit, *de facto* circumventing time limitations for temporary employment. As explained by Pietro, 59:

I was working with a co.co.pro., then I became a cooperative worker but the job was the same, yes the job was exactly the same [...] That lasted a year or so. Then I turned again into a co.co.pro. worker and finally into a TA worker [...] but I continued to work for the same service, from 1999 until now.

Or Dante, 48, who stated:

I think I signed more than 20 renewals overall, including the cooperatives [...] With [the cooperative] they were renewals of 3 months each, I had also one renewal that was 2 months, the longest one was 8 months [...] And then [the agency] came and even there it happened that we had to sign several renewals.

⁴³ 42 months in case the contract is not renewed more than twice in the first 24 months.

Both in the private and in the public sector, the most frequently used contract in alternation with TAW was the cooperative contract. The cooperative contract establishes that the worker becomes a member of a cooperative which provides a service for a firm or the public administration. As a member, the person can provide work for the cooperative (INPS, 2017c). Although the worker is legally an employee, and she is therefore entitled to all employees' rights, the firing regulations are very loose compared to standard workers. Also the *co.co.pro.* (a *parasubordinato* contract) was often used, especially in occupations that required more specific tasks. The law limits the use of this type of contract where a specific project needs to be carried out temporarily or in order to achieve a specific objective (INPS, 2017b). Nevertheless, the general characteristics with which a 'project' is defined in the law has fostered an abuse in the use of this type of contract, as workers are sometimes hired for prolonged periods of time to carry out general tasks (Costantini, 2006). The worker hired on this contract is not formally an employee, but she is regarded as a quasi-self-employed worker, and she consequently has access to more limited employment and social protection than an employee (Fullin, 2004; Costantini, 2006).

Compared to these two other types of contract, the TA contract was the one preferred by the workers, as it guaranteed at least equal treatment to permanent employees. For instance, Dante, who had been employed first with a cooperative and then with the agency, explained: '*The situation has changed, the money has improved, now at least we get the same money as other workers*'. Indeed, workers with a *para-subordinato* contract are regarded as self-employed in pay matters and are therefore not entitled to treatment equal to other workers, while workers with a cooperative contract are entitled to equal treatment with other cooperative workers but not with other workers in the public or private firm where they provide their service. This preference for TAW over other atypical contracts, which will be reiterated in the analysis of the work experience (see chapter 6, section 6.2), reminds us of the risk of compressing all atypical employment into one category, while in reality different atypical contracts provide different divides with standard employment (Zucchetti, 2006; Allmendinger et al., 2013; Hipp et al., 2015). This is an aspect often overlooked in the dualism literature, which tends to theorise a clear-cut distinction between non-standard and standard employment. Nevertheless, the differences between atypical contracts have been long recognised by many authors, mostly from the precariousness literature (e.g. Rodgers and Rodgers, 1989; Nienhüser, 2005; Di Nicola, 2011).

Compared to the 'precariously unstable', the 'precariously stable' workers rarely experienced unemployment. Most of them never experienced unemployment although they often

experienced unpaid work breaks between employment contracts. These unpaid work breaks were due to legal limitations which establish a break of 10 days if the initial contract was of less than 6 months⁴⁴. During these work breaks, workers had the security of restarting the same job, given that they were left home waiting to formally change their employment contract and to return to the same job they were doing before. *'In order not to hire us permanently what did they do? They interrupted our contract, we were left home for 12 days and then we started with a new contract'* (Elisa). *'The only break I have had in these years was for 10 days, a contractual break I mean, between one contract and another there were 10 days'* (Dante). Therefore, employers let the contract expire and started another contract after a certain period, in order not to hire the worker permanently. This practice was experienced by interviewees as an involuntary unpaid work break⁴⁵, and they complained about what it was perceived as an unfair treatment by the hiring clients and a form of abuse allowed by employment regulations. *'Everything only in their favour, not in ours! We were not paid!'* (Elisa). Furthermore, it also meant that all the rights accrued with the previous contract were reset, which was also experienced as a form of abuse by the hirer. As explained by Claudia, 44,

You went from one agency to the other. [The hirer] told you, from day 1 of next month, you will be with agency A, B or Z, and they arrived and they made us sign the new contract en bloc and we started again with those [contracts]! The only problem with this is that every time you start with a new contract, the clock is reset, you are paid off pay increases are reset, holidays are reset. Every time we start over from 0!

Sometimes, however, when the temporary contract could not be renewed or changed anymore, or when the client did not need the worker any longer, the contract was simply left to expire and the worker became unemployed. This is the case of Elisa, who had worked as an employee in the public sector for 15 years before becoming unemployed.

I felt used. I worked there for such a long time and then it's over. [...] They said it is because I do not know enough French and English for what the job requires. But we don't need French and English for what we do, this is just an excuse [...] And how can they say I was not suitable for that job after so many years?

Giada, 31, who had been working as an office clerk, saw her TA contract renewed every few months for more than 3 years before being left unemployed: *'They renewed my contract several times until it was no longer legally possible to do so, that is for 42 months. [...] Then I was left without work.'*

Thus, on the one hand, hirers saw the expiration of a TA contract (or at times, of cooperative or a co.co.pro. contract) as the easiest way of reducing the workforce. Even when the worker

⁴⁴ 20 days in case the initial contract was of 6 months or more (CLICLAVORO.GOV.IT, 201).

⁴⁵ Workers can claim UBs, should they be entitled.

was needed, as in the case of Giada, the unwillingness to hire a worker on a permanent basis more than offset the actual benefits of keeping an experienced worker, who had worked in that job for some years. Thus, in those cases the ‘trap’ in atypical employment was due to the fact that hirers used TAW and other atypical contracts as alternative contracts to the standard one. In those cases, TAW did not function as a job-matching mechanism nor as a ‘buffer’ to gain labour flexibility, but it was used exclusively as a contractual tool to avoid hiring people on a permanent contract. This confirms a substitution effect between standard and atypical employment, where atypical employment is used instead of the standard one (Barbieri and Scherer, 2009). Arguably, the gap in employment protection between standard and atypical workers can help explain this employers’ behaviour, given that employers might be unwilling to hire workers on a permanent basis due to high dismissal costs and long and uncertain litigation procedures (Güell and Petrongolo, 2007; Barbieri and Scherer, 2009).

In that respect, the situation of these workers who were left unemployed after a long period in the same employment, mirrors the situation of Italian workers analysed in section 5.3.2, who were hired permanently only after years of temporary employment. They both reflected the employers use of TAW as a substitute for standard employment, by postponing as long as possible the hiring on a permanent basis as long as they were legally allowed to do so. Only when it was not legally possible anymore, did the hirer assess whether it was more convenient to hire the worker permanently or whether to hire another worker temporarily and discard the current one. Hence, regulations which establish limits on the duration of temporary contracts seem to have fostered behaviours among employers which go against their initial goal of encouraging the stabilisation of temporary workers, by making it compulsory to transform a temporary contract into a permanent one after 36 months.

The experience of being in a ‘trap’ among these TA workers can be argued to foster a divide with standard workers, given that these workers were kept as long as possible in temporary employment and possibilities of transition were constantly delayed. This is in line with the hypothesis derived from the dualism literature (Muffels and Luijkx, 2008; Barbieri and Scherer, 2009; Leschke, 2009), which expected atypical workers in Southern Europe to be more ‘trapped’ in atypical employment compared with their counterparts in Liberal countries, given the limited opportunities of transition into permanent employment even after years into the same job. Furthermore, the analysis revealed how this disadvantage was perceived as unfair by the workers, who felt employers were exploiting flaws in legislation for their own interest and at the expense of the workers.

This use of TAW as a cost-reduction tool was further emphasised by the fact that the majority of the ‘precariously stable’ workers, employed both in the short and long term, did not find the job through the temporary agency but they were instead asked by their future or current hirer to contact a given agency which would deal with contractual matters. As Giada argued:

I did the job interview with this person, and he decided to hire me and a few other colleagues, but only through an agency contract because from [the headquarters] they didn’t want to hire anyone, anymore. So the agency didn’t offer me any service, it was just for the red tape, it didn’t help me find the job or anything.

Or Dante who, after several years after being employed on a cooperative contract, became a TA worker. He explained:

It was our hirer, the manager at [client], that asked the agency to pay us through a contract that was signed between the client and the agency, but for us nothing has changed job wise, only that now we are employed by the agency.

In these cases, the agency served only as a provider of convenient contracts, without providing any other service to either clients or workers. Therefore, instead of functioning as an *ex-ante* intermediary in job matching, TAs functioned as an *ex-post* labour cost reduction tool once a match had already been found between the client and the worker. A shared perception which emerged from this group of workers was that of being at the mercy of opportunistic clients’ behaviour which exploited the cracks in employment regulations and which they felt they have little power to counteract, further highlighting the perceived unfairness of their situation.

Compared to the Italian case, in the British case, I found no evidence of TA workers employed for years by the same client without being made permanent. As already mentioned, TAW in the UK case seemed to be perceived by clients as a quite expensive contract and clients tended to switch to direct hiring relatively quickly. Thus, although the regulations in the use and duration of TA contracts are looser in the UK than in Italy (Voss et al., 2013), the situation where workers were kept in the same job for several years without being made permanent was not found. In comparison with Italy, in the UK, the firing and possible litigation costs did not seem to play a significant role in clients’ choice to use TAW. However, this might not mean that hiring permanently was always convenient for British clients for long-term positions, but that UK employers might use different contracts as a substitute for standard employment rather than TAW, such as, among others, zero-hour contracts. Nonetheless, there is no evidence within my sample of workers ‘stuck’ in the same job over a long period of time without being able to stabilise their position. Therefore, the role of ‘trap’ in atypical employment seemed to be less relevant in the UK than in Italy.

To conclude, the ‘precariously stable’ workers, which were found only in Italy, experienced TAW as a trap, as they were kept in temporary employment despite having worked for the same client for several years. These findings confirm expectations from the dualism literature (e.g. Muffels and Luijkx, 2008; Leschke, 2009) showing that a substitution effect between TAW and standard employment contribute to shaping a ‘trap’ effect. Therefore, for these workers, this employers’ use of TAW translated into an experience of trap in atypical employment, a situation which was not found in the UK context, where there was no evidence of a substitution effect. The situation was perceived as unfair by the majority of interviewees whose feeling was that of being subjected to a form of abuse by their employers.

5.4 TAW and Employment Precariousness

Having shown the different roles TAW played within workers’ employment paths and how it was individually perceived, it is important to analyse the major disadvantages TA workers experienced compared to standard workers both in Italy and in the UK, and why most interviewees employed through a TA contract were aiming to get into a permanent position in the long run. As we will see, among the ‘precariously unstable’ group, the disadvantages described by the interviewees were similar across the two cases, as were the reasons why they would have preferred a permanent contract. Despite the several differences in labour market structures and regulations between the two countries, no significant difference was found either in the willingness to secure a more stable, possibly permanent, employment contract or the reasons for this preference. What was highlighted in both countries was the sense of precariousness related to the changes of employment and continuous switching between employment and unemployment, which engendered a sense of employment instability. By contrast, the experience of precariousness among the ‘precariously stable’ workers, present only in the Italian case, was different. As already mentioned, these workers hardly ever experienced unemployment, and they had considerable job continuity over time. For them, the major disadvantage was the uncertainty related to contract renewals, which prevented them from ever feeling ‘secure’, as they claimed they would have been in standard employment.

These findings do not confirm the hypothesis developed in the analytical framework, which argues a higher experienced divide with standard workers in Southern European compared to Liberal countries. The ‘precariously unstable’ were the ones experiencing the highest degree of precariousness compared to standard workers and their experience was very similar in the two countries, regardless of the different employment regulation frameworks. By contrast, the ‘precariously stable’, who, as we have seen in the previous section, were the ones experiencing

the deepest ‘trap’ effect, enjoyed a more limited divide in their employment experience compared to standard workers, having similar job continuity, though lacking employment security.

In both countries, having a standard job was seen as the way out of precariousness and employment insecurity. This was due to the fact that, in both countries, standard employment afforded a sense of having ‘arrived’, of not having to look for other jobs nor having to worry about contract renewals, regardless of the actual employment protection it granted. This gave workers a sense of stability, as explained by the following quotations. *‘I like to stay in the same place, I like to grow within a company, and so having a permanent contract sort of gives you the stability, you know, I’m going to come here tomorrow, and the next day and the next day’* (Stewart). *‘Psychologically you feel more stable, that’s it’* (Rita, 36). Hence, the different level of protection granted to standard employment in the two countries did not appear to influence the desire of workers to become permanent, as this was perceived as a safe employment status, which would give them a sense of security and stability. Therefore, it can be argued that the greater divide in employment protection in the Italian context did not translate into an individually experienced greater divide, as no systematic difference was found in the two countries among the ‘precariously unstable’.

Furthermore, in both Italy and the UK, the reasons for wanting a permanent job went beyond a pure employment perspective. In fact, standard employment was tied to specific legal rights beyond employment. A good example is that of Bryan. Bryan wanted to marry his partner who was a non-EU citizen. The British immigration law establishes that in order to grant a visa to a British citizen’s partner, the citizen has to be earning a minimum of £18,600 per year and be in a permanent job. However, Bryan was not able to secure a permanent job and this made impossible for his partner to apply for a visa. So they had to marry abroad and live in a different European country for several months in order to be able to apply to different procedure granted to European (non-British) citizens. As Bryan narrated,

So I’d been trying to get that [permanent job], and trying and trying, and I couldn’t! So we couldn’t get the visa – the fiancé visa – and we couldn’t get a marriage visa. If we got married somewhere, we couldn’t get a marriage visa either for him... as a married couple to live together in the UK, because I still would have to earn £18,600. So we found that there is a European immigration where if you live in mainland Europe and you have a husband or wife who is not European, with the European immigration you can go and live in the UK, so we went and got married.

Although Bryan’s situation can be regarded as extreme, it clearly shows how lack of a permanent job might present consequences in a worker’s life that go beyond a pure employment concern, producing a range of disadvantages in many other life aspects including,

as in Bryan's case, the possibility to get a visa for his partner. This was especially the case in situations where having a permanent job was tied to access to certain rights or resources. Thus, in the eyes of interviewees, standard employment appeared to be key to be fully included into society, as many rights and entitlements beyond employment were associated to a standard employment status. In that respect, their employment instability translated into a sense of being an 'outsider' which went beyond the labour market and encompassed other important aspects of their life. We will see more examples of these when discussing income insecurity in chapter 7, section 7.2.

5.4.1 Employment Precariousness among the 'Precariously Unstable'

Words like 'precariousness', 'insecurity', 'instability' were the most frequently mentioned by interviewees in both countries as the main reasons why they did not want to remain TA workers in the long run, and why they were always looking to become permanent. For those who managed to become permanent after a period of TAW, achieving a permanent position was always felt as a relief, as an acquired form of security. For instance, Susanne and Alessandro, who both were made permanent a few months before the interview, after a long period as temporary workers, recalled the situation:

I did have no sense of stability. I remember feeling that I was having to learn to just live in the here and now and not worry about the future, because I had no idea what was going to happen [...] And now I felt, phew, I've got a permanent job, I can relax. (Susanne)

[When temping] I felt it as a form of instability, you really feel precarious. I always felt a bit hanging in the balance, I don't know, even for minor things. (Alessandro, 33)

These workers felt very anxious about their employment prospects as they could never know for how long they would be working in a certain job, and whether their contract would be renewed after the end of the assignment. *'I knew I was gonna be working there for 6 months or maybe a year, and then? Who protects me?'* (Marco). *'It's a lack of security, you don't know what's going to happen. When I started this role, I knew I had it for 2 weeks – I didn't know what was coming when those 2 weeks were over'* (Claire, 32). Employment insecurity translated into the impossibility of career planning but, more simply, in the inability to foresee their employment future farther than a few days or weeks, especially when employed for short-term assignments, an experience which appeared remarkably similar in the two countries. Specifically, workers felt very nervous about not knowing about their possible contract renewal until a few days before, or at times even the day the current contract expired. This was experienced as a deep source of anxiety, a recurrent worry every time a TA contract was about

to expire. *'I was always anxious, because they never told you in advance, they sent you an SMS 2-3 days before the contract expired'* (Giulia). *'It was being renewed week on week – I didn't fully know until the last day'* (Mandy, 35).

A lack of continuity in their job experience was also remarked by the majority of these workers. They felt unable to develop the skills in the work they were doing and they felt continuously bumped between different duties, which at times had little in common. *'A permanent job is a utopia, but I need at least some continuity'* (Chiara). *'It's just like being very precarious, very unstable'* (Andrew). These findings are in line with what had already been highlighted in the precariousness literature, showing atypical workers experiencing little job continuity, limited opportunities for career planning and having a sense of instability (see, for instance, Rogers, 1995; Altieri, 2009; Armano, 2010).

But how did employment insecurity affect the workers' lives? In both countries, it primarily translated into a continuous search for more stable jobs, or simply for another temporary job in case the current contract was not going to be renewed. A number of TA workers in both countries were constantly looking for jobs, a situation which workers found particularly stressful, as it was perceived as a 'job besides having a job'. The majority of these 'precariously unstable' workers continued to look for other job opportunities while employed, as they did not know how long their current employment would last.

I really liked that job, but I was not sure I could stay. I was walking on eggshells. The [client] was very vague [about me staying] but I imagined that once [the permanent worker] was back I would have had to go. So I didn't stop searching. (Marco)

You keep looking, you always keep looking, 'cause you're never safe. (Mandy)

Both in Italy and in the UK, many interviewees, especially those on short-term assignments, kept looking for jobs, handed out CVs, sent applications, went to job interviews or simply constantly browsed temporary agency websites or more generally job search websites for suitable job offers. Sometimes, they spent significant shares of their non-working time looking for possible jobs. Even when registered with one or more temporary agencies, they felt they constantly had to make their presence 'felt' by regularly passing by the agency office or making phone calls to the agency to chase them for job offers.

I think you have to kind of be a little bit annoying with them, any agency, to kind of keep you on their minds so...I didn't do anything for about a week and a half because I felt I didn't want to bother them and my partner said: are you emailing them every day, are you calling them every day? [...] And he says: no, you need to call them and bother them! So I ended up emailing them that afternoon and then like 20 mins later they called me if I wanted to do this job. (Stewart)

I knew them [agency staff] all, Silvia, Clara, more or less I knew them after so many calls, and so many questions. (Marco)

Only when workers were able to secure a job for a longer period, generally for more than a few months, did they feel that they could ‘relax a bit’, although only temporarily, as they restarted the job search a few weeks before their contract expiry.

Overall, employment insecurity deeply affected the lives of the ‘precariously unstable’ in a similar way in both countries. Both in Italy and in the UK, it can be said that they faced a divide in their employment experience compared to standard workers. They complained about the impossibility to have clear employment prospects and the sense of precariousness stemming from not knowing the duration of their current job and future employment opportunities, which is in line with what has previously been found by several authors exploring the disadvantages of atypical workers (e.g. Fullin, 2004; Altieri, 2009; Murgia and Poggio, 2011). This affected their life in several ways, but primarily it translated into a continuous job search, while still employed.

What is relevant to highlight is that, despite very different employment systems and labour market regulations in the two countries, the types of disadvantages underlined by the interviewees did not present systematic differences between the two cases. Unlike what we might have expected from the dualism literature, for the ‘precariously unstable’ the experience of precariousness was similar, showing that at least for some TA workers, the different employment regulation frameworks did not affect their disadvantages in systematically different ways. In that respect, standard employment was perceived in both countries as a secure state, which granted employment continuity and career prospects and allowed for long-term life planning. Besides, as will be further detailed in later chapters, the divide with standard workers spilled over into divides in other aspects of life not directly related to employment, as the permanent employment status granted access to a number of rights and entitlements outside employment from which workers were otherwise excluded.

5.4.2 Employment Precariousness among the ‘Precariously Stable’

This experience of precariousness among the ‘precariously stable’ was rather different from the previous group. They faced little employment security, but they experienced continuity in their job and thus had a sense of job stability. However, these workers had been employed by the same client for several years but at the end of each assignment they did not know whether their contract would be renewed once again, causing them a sense of persistent employment

insecurity. For instance, Elisa, who was employed in the same job for 13 years through different contracts and several renewals, explained, *'Me and my colleagues always experienced this very badly, with every time the distress of not knowing whether your contract will be renewed for another two months, it has always been distressful, because you never know...'*. Or Fabio, who had been employed for almost 3 years by the same client through repeated contract renewals, *'There is the problem of not knowing – but that is, I think, a problem which happens everywhere – until the last day, until the last week, whether your contract will be renewed or not'*.

Thus, even after having been employed for several years in the same job, workers never had any employment security and they might be left unemployed after the expiration of the last contract, without notice. This was perceived as a form of abuse by some interviewees, as the client was using them until they were no longer needed. As Marco complained, *'The [client] can take advantage of it, keeping you in this limbo of temporary contracts for a long time, and as it could have happened to me after three years, they could have just said 'Goodbye'!'*. For these 'precariously stable' workers, the main disadvantage was of not knowing whether their employment contract was going to be renewed or not. This confirms findings from authors investigating precariousness among atypical workers in Italy (e.g. Altieri, 2009; Morelli et al., 2012), showing atypical workers in a precarious employment condition even after years in the same job.

Similarly to the previous group, this also affected long-term life decisions, as the workers were not able to access rights and resources granted to standard workers (see chapter 7, section 7.2). No gender effect could be identified. Nevertheless, their situation tended to be more long-lasting than for most of the 'precariously unstable', four of these people had been in this situation for more than a decade, given the trap effect previously discussed (see section 5.3.4). Given that they had seen their contract renewed for several years, they did not look for a different job, hoping to see their employment contract renewed also in the future. However, they continued to look for standard positions, either with the same client or elsewhere. Overall, the 'precariously stable' enjoyed much more job continuity compared to the 'precariously unstable'. However, similarly to the latter, they had limited employment security, not knowing whether their contract was going to be renewed or not in the future. This meant for them a prolonged experience of employment insecurity which reflected in life constraints and a sense of precariousness which extended for long periods, in some cases more than a decade, with a limited prospect of stabilisation in the near future.

In conclusion, the analysis of the ‘precariously stable’ employment experience reveals a different type of precariousness compared to the ‘precariously unstable’. The former had an employment experience which was similar to that of standard workers, with one important difference: a lack of employment security. This shows that the disadvantages they faced did not only differ from TA workers in the UK, but also from other TA workers in Italy, challenging the idea that disadvantages among atypical workers can be mostly interpreted along country lines. Furthermore, it can be argued that when employment regulations are involved in creating a ‘trap’ effect for TA workers, they also engender a specific type of precarious employment experience, which has different features compared to the employment experience of the ‘precariously unstable’ and can be argued to be somewhat less insecure.

5.5 Public Employment Services: An Alternative to Private Employment Agencies?

TAW was perceived by interviewees in both countries as the only alternative way to find employment compared to an independent job search, as TA workers in neither country relied on public employment services. However, as shown in this section, this was due to two different reasons.

In the Italian case, none of the interviewees relied on public employment services to find them a job or to look for one. The role of the *Centri per l’Impiego* (public employment centres) in helping people finding employment was seen by all interviewees as irrelevant or inexistent. The *Centri per l’Impiego* were perceived to function mainly as an administrative bureau where the worker had to register in order to be able to claim unemployment benefits, but they did not provide an effective tool for job search and placement. Elisa, who went to the employment centre in August 2014 after being left unemployed, said: *‘I was given an appointment but it is very far away in time, it is for the month of December’*. Giada, who went to the employment centre immediately after finishing a TA assignment, stated: *‘They called me after three months, asking whether I wanted to go [to the employment centre] to be interviewed... I mean, after three months! I went, but I never heard anything after that.’* Hence, public employment centres were only used to register for passive benefits but they did not provide any help in job search or placement (see chapter 7, section 7.3.1 for a detailed perception of activation requirements to receive UB benefits).

Most interviewees who registered with the employment centre found the lack of any form of help in job search and other employment services as a serious disadvantage, in that they were left with the individual burden of looking for employment, without any form of public support.

As Chiara complained: *'I felt abandoned. Yes, I got the [unemployment benefit] money, and then they finished, and then what? They really didn't help me with anything, I had to do everything on my own'*. Although many attempts have been made to implement effective active labour market policies in the Italian context (see, for instance, Jessoula and Vesan, 2011), a person who is unemployed cannot be said to be able to rely on public employment services to search for a job or to be helped through placement services. The lack of effective active labour market policies was experienced as a serious issue which tended to disproportionately affect temporary workers, especially the 'precariously unstable', who experienced recurrent spells of unemployment. The *de facto* inexistence of public employment services obliged the interviewees who lost their job to rely on private agencies or on their own means to find employment.

In the UK, the use of public employment services was also limited, albeit for different reasons. The UK has strongly promoted welfare-to-work policies since the late 1990s, when the first Blair Government and has fostered active labour market policies to move people back to work as soon as possible (Clasen, 2011; Heyes, 2013). The reforms have attached strong conditionality to unemployment benefits. Rigorous sanctioning in case of non-attendance was implemented already during the Labour governments and was further reinforced in the 2010s, during the first Cameron Government (Grimshaw and Rubery, 2012; Heyes, 2013). Within the sample, the vast majority of interviewees preferred not to register with the job centres and not to claim unemployment benefits in order not to be tied to conditionality requirements, and being constrained in their job choices. Furthermore, interviewees preferred to look for a job independently without relying on public employment services, as they were perceived more as watchdogs to prevent benefit abuse rather than an actual help for people who were looking for work.

As we will see in chapter 7, section 7.3.1, benefit claiming in the UK was also associated with a social stigma. This stigma was also partly reflected in the use of public employment services for job search and placement purposes, as workers did not want to rely on them to find employment, as they did not want to appear unable to secure a job without public help. *'I found jobs on my own, I don't like... I can get my own jobs!'* (Rachel, 43). Moreover, given the stigma attached to using public employment services to find a job, the majority of interviewees did not think the employment centres could provide suitable jobs for them, as the jobs they thought they offered tended to be perceived as low-quality and targeted to people most in need. *'No, they are not for me. I'm not the kind of person they could find a job for... You know, I mean, I don't think they have jobs for people like me.'* (Sarah, 47). Hence, there

was a wide-spread perception among interviewees that employment centres did not provide job search and placement services for ‘normal’ people, but that they are focused on people who would not be able to find a job otherwise, a hypothetical ‘them’ which was not clearly defined, but which can be interpreted as the needy, those who would have difficulties finding work individually, and those trying to abuse the benefit system, from which they wanted to distance themselves.

We can argue that employment centres were perceived as meant for ‘outsiders’ with whom the interviewees did not want to identify or be identified with. Hence, TA workers in the UK did not want to rely on public employment services because they were perceived as targeting specific segments of the labour force who would have serious problems finding employment independently. To be precise, I cannot generalise these attitudes to other potential users of public employment services in the UK, but it allows me to explain why private employment agencies were perceived by those who rely on them as the only alternative to an independent job search.

In conclusion, public employment services in both countries were of limited use to the TA workers interviewed. In Italy this was due to their focus on administration procedures and ineffective active labour market policies implementation. In the UK, they were perceived as targeted to certain social groups with which the interviewees did not want to be identified, as well as mostly tied to welfare-to-work policies aimed at reducing welfare dependency. Therefore, in both countries TAs were perceived as the only alternative to an independent job search in order to find employment. Hence, we can argue that, despite their very different organisation, active labour market policies in both countries play a role, if not in increasing, at least in preventing the reduction of the divide with standard workers, given that they do not provide suitable support in the job search in the eyes of all interviewees. The lack of suitable employment services in both countries, though in principle affecting both standard and TA workers in the same way, in practice it disproportionately affected the ‘precariously unstable’, who found themselves often looking for jobs, both during the recurrent spells of unemployment, as well as while employed in short-term TA assignments, as discussed in section 5.4.1 of this chapter.

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted important similarities and differences in the employment experience of TA workers in the two countries and it has shown the role played by institutional

configurations in shaping those experiences. Firstly, in contrast to what we might have expected from the institutional divides identified in the analytical framework, the different level of employment protection granted to standard workers in the two employment regulations settings did not appear to play a role in the perception of standard employment as stable and all but one interviewee were aiming to reach standard employment in the future. TAW was experienced as a source of employment insecurity, which had major consequences for the majority of interviewees' lives. Hence, TAW was mostly perceived as a second best choice, while waiting for a permanent position. In both countries, it can be argued that TAW did not allow the interviewees to perceive themselves as fully integrated into the labour market and that there was a perceived divide between their status and that of standard workers.

Nevertheless, the possibility of becoming permanent was experienced partly differently in the two countries, but not always in the way previously hypothesised. In line with previous hypotheses, the substitution of TAW for standard employment in Italy appeared to play an important role in shaping a 'trap' effect for those employed on a probationary period before being hired permanently. This can be argued to be due to the unwillingness of Italian employers to hire workers on a permanent basis. As has been discussed by several dualist authors, this might be at least partly explained by the gap in employment protection between standard and atypical workers, which makes employers unwilling to hire workers on a permanent contract due to difficulty in firing them and in potentially high dismissal costs (e.g. Mitlacher, 2007; Barbieri and Scherer, 2009; Muffels, 2015). The situation was brought to an extreme for one group of workers, the 'precariously stable', who had been employed in the same job for several years, at times for more than a decade, through atypical contracts, without ever being offered a standard position. In those situations, TAW was used in alternation with other atypical contracts to prolong their employment relationship, but with limited opportunities for being hired permanently. This situation was generally perceived as an abuse on the side of the employers, and many workers considered themselves to be treated unfairly. It can be argued that the employment regulation framework in the Italian context has buttressed a divide between standard and TA workers, while this did not appear to be the case in the UK, confirming hypotheses from the analytical framework, which expected atypical workers to feel more trapped in atypical employment in Southern Europe compared to Liberal countries.

However, for certain groups of workers, the situation was similar in the two countries, going against the initial hypotheses. On the one hand, those employed as a 'buffer' experienced continuous cycles of employment-unemployment without being able to become permanent, a situation which did not appear to be affected by the different employment regulation

frameworks in the two countries. Workers in those situations did not necessarily consider themselves to be treated unfairly by the employers or the agencies, although some of those in very short-term assignments complained about feeling at disposal. On the other hand, TAW was also experienced in the two countries as a way to move out of unemployment. No systematic difference between Italy and the UK could be identified, showing that for some workers in both countries, TAW might also contribute to reducing the divide with standard employment, helping individuals re-entering the labour market. These findings highlight that, although a trap effect in atypical employment was only present in Italy and it was due to the larger employment divide in employment protection granted to standard workers, the trap effect in a cycle of employment-unemployment was remarkably similar in both countries, and it was not affected by the employment regulations of either country. This shows that, even in countries with different employment regulation frameworks, similar traps can emerge out of hirers' use of TAW.

When it comes to the experience of precariousness and the related disadvantages, a further important finding emerged. Not only the employment regulation framework played a role in shaping the transition into standard employment, but it also contributed to shaping the types of disadvantages experienced by interviewees. Those employed as a buffer, whose status did not appear to be affected by the employment regulation framework, can be argued to experience the highest degree of employment precariousness, experiencing similar disadvantages in the two countries as regards the lack of job continuity, limited career prospects and the lack of job security. By contrast, those trapped in temporary agency work employed because they were used by hirers as a substitute for standard workers, faced a lack of job security, but they enjoyed a more stable employment experience, with a lower degree of precariousness compared to the previous group. Therefore, it can be said that the employment regulations in Italy and in the UK contributed to influencing the experience of precariousness of TA workers both statically and dynamically, but it did not necessarily engender a deeper sense of precariousness from a static perspective.

Finally, public employment services in both countries could be said to contribute to shaping a divide with standard workers, despite their different organisation in the two countries. In both countries, TA workers felt they could not rely on those services for their job search and placement, limiting their opportunities to find employment. In Italy, this was due to the fact that they were perceived as slow and ineffective, providing limited practical support. By contrast, in the UK, public employment services were associated with strict activation requirements for accessing unemployment benefits and their use was perceived as

stigmatising, discouraging workers from relying on them for their search for employment. Therefore, an individual job search and the use of private agencies were considered in both countries the only options to access the labour market.

6. Work Experience

6.1 Introduction

This chapter analyses the work experience of the interviewees in order to highlight the types of disadvantages they experienced at the workplace and how these were perceived in relation to those of standard workers. The first part of the chapter discusses the broad category of working conditions. As we will see, the individual experience only partly mirrors the equality formally guaranteed by the institutional framework in the two countries. Internal social dynamics at the workplace draw a complex picture of the insider-outsider divide, which could not be simply traced back to an institutional divide notwithstanding its close relation to the differences in the employment status. It is shown that, on the one hand, in both countries, the intrinsic characteristics of TAW present inherent disadvantages in working conditions compared to standard employment. These disadvantages were generally perceived as fair by the interviewees. On the other hand, discriminatory practices based on the employment status contributed to shaping a divide between standard and atypical workers with similar disadvantages being shaped both in Italy and in the UK. Contrary to the previous category, these disadvantages were regarded as a source of unfairness.

The latter part of the chapter focuses on individual and collective representation at the workplace. This allows us to assess the bargaining power workers have in improving their employment and working conditions in comparative perspective. I argue that, as regards individual representation, in the majority of cases in both countries, the interviewees' employment status was perceived to present a weak bargaining position, which translated into actual disadvantages in working conditions and in the impossibility to claim rights to which these workers were formally entitled. When it came to collective representation, workers generally refrained from joining unions for several different reasons, some of which could be directly attributed to their employment status. Notwithstanding the different organisation of collective representation in the UK and in Italy, TA workers in both countries faced similar disadvantages and presented similar reasons for not being part of a union, leaving them in a much weaker bargaining position compared to their standard colleagues.

The chapter is structured as follows. Section 6.2 considers aspects of the working experience, including: pay and complementary earnings (section 6.2.1), working time (section 6.2.2), relations with colleagues (section 6.2.3) and job content (section 6.2.4). The second part of the chapter analyses individual representation (section 6.3), to end with collective representation (section 6.4). Section 6.5 draws the relevant conclusions.

6.2 Working Conditions

This section discusses four aspects of working conditions which can be regarded as among the most relevant in a job (see chapter 3, section 3.4.2): pay, working time, relations with colleagues and job content. As I discuss below, although legislation both in Italy and in the UK formally guarantees equal treatment in most working conditions with other workers in the same job position, the actual workplace practices in certain cases produced a divide between TA workers and standard employees. Several divides based on the employment status were present in the workplace, of which only a minority could be attributed to regulations of working conditions in the two countries. Therefore, it can be argued that even where no institutional divide with standard workers was present, being a TA worker was experienced as a condition of ‘outsider’ in several aspects of the working experience. These findings go partly against hypotheses developed in the analysis of institutional divides, given that the TA workers have the right to equal treatment in most working conditions (see chapter 2, section 2.6.2). Nevertheless, as we will see, they are in line with findings from the precariousness literature, which showed atypical workers to be at a disadvantage in several working conditions. To be precise, these divides were not present in all interviewees’ experiences, as many workplace environments actively promoted inclusion and equal treatment, but, in 17 cases (evenly spread between the two countries), the employment status constituted a barrier to full integration and discrimination of TA workers was common practice.

6.2.1 Pay

In Italy, both national law and collective agreements grant equal pay treatment between TA workers and regular workers in equivalent job positions from the first day of the assignment, while in the UK equal pay is only guaranteed after 12 weeks in the same assignment (BIS, 2011; Wynn, 2014). However, in both countries, equal pay is only granted as regards basic elements of pay, including performance-related bonuses, but it does not apply to other elements of pay, including seniority-based pay rises and occupational bonuses. The analysis of the individual experience broadly reflects these institutional divides provided by the legislative framework on pay matters.

Firstly, the analysis highlighted that in both countries timing and transparency of pay were generally praised by interviewees. Payments by the agency were usually on time and little concern was given to the degree of transparency of payment methods and no systematic difference emerged either between the two countries or between different categories of workers. In 12 cases (seven in Italy and five in the UK), the actual amount of pay was stated

to be quite low. However, this was due to the position in which they were employed rather than the actual employment contract, an issue which is unrelated to their employment status and concerns pay levels in each country. The fact that TA workers and atypical workers more generally tend to be employed in low-paid jobs has been discussed at length in the literature (see for instance, Tucker, 2003; Pedersini, 2010) but this goes beyond the scope of this thesis. Furthermore, the fact that the majority of employees were satisfied with their pay might be partly explained by the selection criteria used. It must be noted that the sample included only individuals working full-time and it excluded workers with lower amounts of hours worked.

The general perception of fairness of pay in relation to the employment contract could be argued to reflect equal pay rules in the two countries. Legislation on equal pay in both countries has eliminated the pay divide between different categories of workers, although in the UK this applies only after 12 weeks, provided that hourly pay does not fall below the legally set minimum wage (BIS, 2011). Although the 12-week delay in the application of equal pay was perceived by two interviewees as unfair, it was mostly considered as a probationary period which did not last long, after which the worker would get full pay rights. As Cathy, 33, commented, *'They pay you a bit less at the beginning, you know, just to see how you work'*. This reflects the idea of being on a 'trial' period, which we have already encountered when discussing their employment experience (see chapter 5, section 5.3.2). Hence, the majority of workers in the UK perceived this disadvantage as legitimate and of limited duration. Therefore, the delay in equal treatment was perceived by the majority of interviewees in the British case as an initial 'purgatory', but not as a long-lasting disadvantage.

Furthermore, a number of hirers in the UK have introduced equal pay policies from the first day of assignment, eliminating any pay gap between different employment contracts. This is the case, for instance, of higher education institutions, which in Edinburgh are important hirers. As Mhairi, 58, who started working as an administrative assistant at a university, explained, *'a couple of years ago it was established that all universities across the whole of the UK would pay everyone at standard rates [...] and because of that, I'm being paid what I should be paid for what I'm doing'*. Hence, private initiatives from employers have contributed to further reducing the remaining pay divide between employment contracts in the UK context, although no data could be found on how widespread these initiatives are.

In Italy, the right to equal pay established for TAW contrasted with the generally lower pay level provided by the most common other atypical contracts used in alternation with TAW, namely *para-subordinati* and cooperative. Indeed, workers with a *para-subordinato* contract

are regarded as self-employed in pay matters and are therefore not entitled to equal treatment with comparable workers, while workers with a cooperative contract are entitled to equal treatment with other cooperative workers but not with other workers in the public or private firm where they provide their service. Therefore, compared to these two other types of contract, the TA contract was the preferred one by the workers, as it guaranteed pay treatment equal to that of standard employees. For instance, Dante, 48, who had been employed first with a cooperative and then with an agency, said, *'The situation has changed, the money has improved, now at least we get the same money as other workers'*. This shows that among functionally equivalent contracts, TAW was the preferred one as it was the one that provided the most limited divide with standard workers. We have seen similar perceptions when discussing the employment experience of the 'precariously stable' and where the TAW contract was once again the preferred one among other atypical contracts (chapter 5, section 5.3.4). This highlights that not all atypical contracts are the same in terms of the disadvantages they engender, a consideration which has already been highlighted in the precariousness literature (see, for instance, Rodgers and Rodgers, 1989; De Graaf-Zijl, 2005; Giunchi et al., 2016) but which has received more limited attention in the dualism literature, with a few exceptions (e.g. Berton et al., 2012; Hipp et al., 2015). As already mentioned, dualist theorists have been mostly keen on representing the labour market in dichotomous terms, generally disregarding differences within the broad category of atypical employment.

In contrast to the common perception of fairness in basic pay, the majority of workers in both countries criticised the lack of entitlement to complementary pay and ineligibility for pay rises connected to length of service. As previously mentioned, the legislation on equal pay in both countries only guarantees equal treatment for the basic elements of pay, but it does not include any complementary pay, apart from performance-related bonuses. This was perceived as a strong disadvantage in comparison to regular employees. *'They were getting an increment year on year, they got all the benefits of length of service...'* (Mhairi). *'We do the same job as they do, is it right that they get bonuses? Or the length of service pay increase?'* (Stefano, 38). The disadvantage was particularly severe for those 'precariously unstable' employed for a relatively long period of time by the same hirer and it could be regarded as extreme for the 'precariously stable' who, despite having worked in the same job for many years, were not entitled to any pay rise related to seniority and had to restart at the same pay scale every time their contract got renewed. Therefore, it can be argued that this disadvantage was more prominent in the Italian context, given that, as we have seen (chapter 5, section 5.3.2 and section 5.3.4), people tend to be 'trapped' in TAW for longer periods of time in Italy than in

the UK. As Claudia, 44, who worked for the same hirer for 16 years, complained: *‘Our disadvantage is that every time you always start from scratch [...] Every year it is a fight!’*. Workers in this situation complained that they did not see any recognition by their hirer of the length of service and that every contract renewal erased any seniority rights. Hence, even after years of employment in the same job they were still only entitled to basic pay rates, experiencing a growing divide in pay matters with comparable standard workers, who were instead entitled to a seniority pay rise. This disadvantage was perceived as highly unfair by the interviewees, who complained they were being treated differently for the same type and amount of work.

In the comparison of the two countries with respect to pay matters, many similarities between Italy and the UK emerged. Both countries have granted equal treatment in basic elements of pay. This was reflected as a general perception of fairness in pay treatment among workers in both countries. Although UK legislation grants equal pay treatment only after 12 weeks of assignment, this was not perceived as a serious issue by the large majority of interviewees. What was instead strongly criticised was the unfair treatment as regards complementary pay, and the main problem which emerged in the interviews was particularly related to ineligibility to seniority pay rises. Therefore, it can be argued that, with respect to pay matters, the experienced disadvantages at the individual level closely reflect divides in the regulations of working conditions. Nevertheless, two important considerations emerged. On the one hand, the delayed equal treatment in the UK was interpreted as part of a trial period which ends at 12 weeks. On the other hand, the prolonged employment experience in TAW of many interviewees in Italy meant that the lack of entitlement to pay rises was experienced as a growing divide with standard workers over time, sometimes increasing over several years.

6.2.2 Working Time

Equal treatment with regard to working time, including annual leave, is formally guaranteed by legislation in both countries, though in the UK it again only applies after a 12-week period. This was generally reflected in the interviewees’ experience, who had access to the same daily and weekly rests as their standard counterparts. A number of workers were doing shift work, which included working at night or at weekends, but this appeared to be due to the type of job rather than their employment contract, as this applied also to their colleagues on a standard contract. The literature has identified that workers in atypical employment are more likely to

work unsocial hours (see, for instance, Letourneux, 1998) but this has been attributed to a compositional effect of the types of jobs available to atypical workers and it goes beyond the scope of this thesis.

Nevertheless, in both countries, disadvantages were experienced as regards annual leave. In many TA assignments, it was common practice to have holiday pay already included in the payslip without the possibility of being paid for the days off taken during the year. The rationale behind this practice was that workers on relatively short assignments might not need holidays and they would prefer to receive holiday pay in every payslip rather than taking time off. This meant that workers felt constrained to reducing the days of annual leave to a minimum in order not to lose income, as their holidays would have been unpaid. Many workers openly complained about this practice, which prevented them the possibility to enjoy annual leave to which they would have been legally entitled to. As Alberto, 54, complained:

The holidays you accrue, they paid them, but then you don't have the chance to go on holidays... I got information, and they cannot do it. So, when at the end of the year I want to go on holiday for a week, they don't pay me, but they are wrong!

This practice appeared to be equally spread in both countries and it was particularly common in short-term and medium-term employment experiences lasting less than a year, while no evidence was found of this practice for people employed for longer periods, such as among the 'precariously stable', suggesting that this practice is probably confined to relatively short-term employment experiences. However, when TA workers happened to have their short-term contract renewed several times with the same hirer or when they moved continuously from one assignment to the other, this practice prevented them from enjoying any annual leave unless they were willing to lose income. This was clearly pointed out by Tom, 31:

I don't really need holiday pay, because I'm probably not gonna take any holiday if I'm only gonna be here for a few weeks, but there's a guy there who's been there for 6 months who's a temp. Now presumably, within 6 months, you might want to take holidays, and you won't get paid for that week off, you know, you'll get nothing that week.

Both in Italy and in the UK, aside from the impossibility to claim paid annual leave in the cases just mentioned, even when TA workers were given the possibility to take annual leave, the actual characteristics of their employment status, such as the duration of their contract and the possibility of non-renewal made it difficult to plan any holiday. This was the case, for instance, of Paolo, 36, who tried to request summer holiday after the renewal of his contract in March:

Then the holidays, I went to [the line manager] to ask for holidays to [line manager] and he said I couldn't have them because every slot had already been booked in January, and I said, how could I have booked in January if I didn't even know if I was going to still be there, if I was gonna get renewed?

Apart from the uncertainty related to contract renewals, the fact that when a contract expired the unused accrued annual leave was paid directly into the last payslip, meant for most people the inability to enjoy any paid time off sometimes for long periods, even when they had been working in the same job for several months. This was perceived as a form of unfairness which was beyond their control to change.

Furthermore, in both countries, this issue was further complicated by commonplace practices in many workplaces which openly discriminated against TA workers and other atypical workers vis-à-vis regular employees. These practices mainly entailed that permanent employees were given priority in choosing when to go on annual leave, with the usual limitations related to the hirer's needs, while TA workers could only be allocated the remaining available slots. *'When they decide the holidays, first they let the [regular] employees decide the holidays, then there are the TA workers and the others'* (Francesca, 41). *'They let the permanent ones decide first, that's how it goes'* (Lilian, 45). This left TA workers and other atypical workers with limited choice on when to take time off and having those choices subordinated to the ones made by regular employees. This was perceived as a form of outright discrimination against atypical workers, whose formal right to equal treatment with regard to annual leave was not respected in practice.

In conclusion, initial hypotheses which expected a lack of disadvantage in working time given equal treatment rules were confirmed in the workers' experience for all aspects of working time but annual leave. With respect to the latter, in both countries, being a TA worker presented profound disadvantages compared to standard workers. Although the legislative framework formally guarantees equal treatment in working time after 12 weeks in the UK and from the start of the contract in Italy, the experience of TA workers presented a different picture. On the one hand, the intrinsic uncertainty related to job duration and contract renewal contributed to more limited possibilities to take time off compared to permanent employees. Although these disadvantages were not perceived necessarily as unfair, they contributed in the perception of TA workers of being subjected to a different treatment. On the other hand, common discrimination practices at the workplace, which went against rules of equal treatment, created a divide between TA workers and standard employees, further reducing the ability to take time off and restricting the TA workers' freedom to choose when to take leave.

Hence it can be argued that although no divide or a temporary one was identified in the analysis of institutional characteristics, the experience of the interviewees showed that practices in the workplaces went against the principle of equal treatment established by law, engendering a disadvantage for TA workers in the ability to take annual leave.

6.2.3 Relations with Colleagues

Outright forms of discrimination were not limited to annual leave. Although in the majority of workplaces in both countries TA workers felt included into social groups at work and they did not feel like they were treated any differently by their colleagues, 11 cases (six in the UK and five in Italy), the employment status constituted a source of discrimination.

In both countries, the most commonly mentioned forms of discrimination were verbal discriminations, for instance in situations in which the person was addressed as ‘the temp’. As Tom explained, *‘even just the word that you’re referred to as like, oh this is Tom, he’s a temp, he’s a temp – it’s almost like you’re sort of disposable’*. Although this might sound like a minor issue, this was considered by interviewees a particularly annoying discriminatory practice as it actively contributed to their perception of being an ‘outsider’, of being different from other co-workers. Rogers (1995), analysing the experience of TA workers in the US, found similar forms of verbal discrimination in the American context.

Other forms of open discrimination were found frustrating, such as in social relations with colleagues, who kept a social distance between regular employees and TA workers and avoided including TA workers into social groups. These included social events in and out of the workplace. As Elisa, 52, commented, *‘you feel a bit discriminated against [...] when they did group events and various other stuff that now I don’t remember but there was a division between [regular] employees and TA workers’*. These forms of discrimination were most common in cases where the TA worker was employed only for relatively short assignments, although these were not unheard of in workplaces where the worker had been employed for more than a year, such as in the just mentioned case of Elisa.

Furthermore, even in cases where there was no open discrimination, both in Italy and in the UK, interviewees sometimes found it difficult to integrate into a generally long-established social group, where colleagues had known each other for a relatively long time. Unlike the previously mentioned open forms of discrimination, these were not perceived as unfair, but rather a ‘natural’ disadvantage due to the nature of their employment status. Moreover, people employed for relatively short assignments felt co-workers were not willing to put effort and

time to get to know them as they were probably not going to stay long. As Francesca pointed out, *'They know you are probably not gonna be there for long, so they just don't try to get to know you, it can feel quite isolating sometimes'*. Or Tom, who said:

I think the people who are working there, they don't feel like there's any point in investing much time or effort into you, cause for all they know you'll be gone in a week or two, so why should they treat you, why should they spend... waste their time on you, when for all they know, you'll disappear.

In both countries, this behaviour was generally considered by interviewees as quite natural, as they probably would have done the same in their co-workers' position. However, they felt excluded from the social networks of colleagues, limiting opportunities for social integration and contributing to a sense of being an 'outsider'. These findings are in line with previous studies from the precariousness literature (e.g. Rogers, 1995; Letourneux, 1998; Pocock et al., 2005) which have highlighted the higher difficulties among temporary workers to establish personal relations with colleagues and to be integrated into social groups at the workplace given the temporary nature of their work experience.

The empirical analysis revealed that disadvantages in relations with colleagues were only experienced in a minority of workplaces in the two countries. Nevertheless, especially among the 'precariously unstable', the numerous changes of workplace meant that the majority of workers in this group experienced a disadvantage in the relation with colleagues during one or more of their assignments. These situations were most common in workplaces where TA workers were employed for short-term assignments and where only a small number of temporary workers were present, but they were not confined to those cases, revealing a more wide-spread issue of integration at the workplace for TA workers.

Overall, it can be argued that, in several cases in both countries, the characteristics of the employment status of the interviewees produced disadvantages in social relations with colleagues. On the one hand, this could be attributed to active discriminatory practices by standard co-workers, which were regarded as highly unfair. On the other hand, it can be traced back to employment instability, and more precisely to the continuous changes of workplace common among the 'precariously unstable', which made it difficult to integrate into already established social networks, but which was regarded as a 'natural' disadvantage given the short-term nature of the job. These disadvantages tended to be more serious the shorter the assignment, making those with more unstable working experiences more exposed to those disadvantages. These findings are contrary to the initial hypotheses derived from the dualism

literature which supposed no divide in working conditions among TA workers, given the equal treatment formally established between standard and TA workers. On the contrary, they are in line with several studies in the precariousness literature, showing that even where no formal institutional divide is in place, other factors might come into play in shaping the perception of being an ‘outsider’ and in moulding a perceived divide between standard and atypical workers.

6.2.4 Job Content

Legislation in the UK does not specify any regulation as regards job content. By contrast, in Italy national legislation establishes that the hirer has to justify the reasons for use. Nevertheless, as discussed in chapter 4, section 4.4, these limitations have been recently loosened and they have never been specific to begin with, leaving hirers with much leeway in employing TA workers as they wished. As I discuss below, the experience of workers shows no systematic difference between the two countries with respect to job content, although significant disadvantages were experienced in a minority of workplaces compared to standard workers. Some problems with job content and workloads, similar to basic pay and working time, were generally attributed to the job position rather than to the employment status and they were generally perceived as fair. Nevertheless, specific disadvantages, could be identified which pertain to the employment status, although, once again, they could only be identified for a minority of cases. These were generally considered as forms of unfair treatment.

Firstly, the variety of activities TA workers had to do was in five cases (three in Italy and two in the UK) much greater than those of standard workers. *‘They move you from one place to the other, in my case, for example, they have moved me to different departments, I don’t know if it’s good or bad, but the permanent ones are always in the same place’* (Fabio, 44). This was generally justified by the nature of TAW itself, which could be used by employers to cover for temporary shortages of workforce or, in the case of increased workloads, in certain activities. Therefore, it was accepted as an intrinsic component of being a TA worker although it upset interviewees as it did not allow them to have job content continuity and contributed to their perception of disposability. *‘We are the stopgaps for them, you know that, we all know that’* (Alberto). *‘They’re not interested in getting a job for you, they just wanna fill a position.’* (Tom). As highlighted in the precariousness literature (e.g. Rogers, 1995; Altieri et al., 2009; Murgia and Poggio, 2011), this might produce situations of both over-work and under-work, given the fluctuations in workload depending on the hirers’ needs, but in all cases, it provided a sense of discontinuity in their working experience. In that respect, Altieri et al. (2009) talk

about a 'fragmentation' of the working experience among TA workers, who carry out different tasks with little connection between each other.

Secondly, both in Italy and in the UK, besides the lack of continuity in job tasks, a common practice already identified by some authors in the precariousness literature (e.g. Murgia and Poggio, 2011) was that of letting TA workers do the most menial job tasks among a specific set of activities, while standard employees kept for themselves the most pleasant. *'They make you do the lousiest job tasks, 'cause you are at the bottom of the pile'* (Alessandro, 33). *'Yeah, you know you have to do what the others don't wanna do'* (Andrew, 31). These discriminatory practices were often justified on the grounds of employment hierarchy, where TA workers were at the bottom of the hierarchy or where they were simply the 'last' arrived. Again, this was especially common for people employed in short-term assignments but it was not confined to those cases, showing how the internal division of labour was sometimes chosen according to the employment status. For instance, Chiara, 40, was explicitly told this by her line manager in her current assignment, *'The line-manager of this firm made it clear that I had to follow a certain order, that I was the last one arrived, that I had to follow a hierarchy'*.

Thus, in a minority of cases in both countries, the employment status was a source of disadvantage in job content, due to two main workplace practices. These were the continuous re-assignment to different job tasks depending on the contingent necessities of the hirer to adjust the internal division of labour and the assignment to the least pleasant job tasks based on an unwritten hierarchy between different employment statuses. However, while the former was due to structural characteristic of the type of employment contract and it was therefore somehow perceived as justifiable, the latter, which was based on informal and arbitrary norms was perceived as a form of unfair discrimination.

Once again, no systematic difference could be detected between the two countries, while the length of employment in the same workplace was generally associated with lower discrimination on this subject, disproportionately affecting the 'precariously unstable'. These disadvantages in job content confirm hypotheses from the precariousness literature, which highlighted an existing divide among atypical workers in job content and which do not depend on regulations in working conditions, but rather on the practices of hirers and line-managers. These findings further contribute to showing that even where no formal institutional divide is in place, the intrinsic characteristics of TAW and discriminatory workplace practices based on the employment status fostered a divide between standard and TA workers and these disadvantages were similar in the two countries.

6.3 Individual Bargaining Power

Having discussed the main disadvantages faced by TA workers in their working conditions, it is relevant to explore the reasons why the interviewees did not try to fight against those disadvantages, especially in trying to counteract discriminatory practices which are formally illegal. The main issue which emerged in the interviews was the interviewees' limited bargaining power at the workplace. This limited bargaining power was caused by their insecure employment status and by the hirers' power of not renewing their employment contract after its expiry. As I discuss below, in both countries, the threat of non-renewal was experienced as an important weapon in the hands of hirers, limiting workers' voice and even hampering the exercise of formal rights. This imbalance of power between temporary workers and hirers can be conceptualised by the Italian term '*ricattabilità*' which can be translated in English as 'liability to be blackmailed'. Nevertheless, the English concept of blackmailing entails a narrower and stronger connotation compared to the Italian term, which entails a more abstract condition in which one part in a relationship has the power to damage the other, should the other not act according to her command. Hence, given that no precisely equivalent term could be found in English, I will use the Italian term throughout the section.

I argue that three different levels of *ricattabilità* could be identified among the interviewees, of which the latter two could be equated with the English concept of blackmailing. The first level entails an implicit perception of weakness due to the employment status. The second one includes explicit references by hirers and line-managers to the employment status to affect workers' behaviour. Finally, the third level entails outright abuse by hirers and line-managers, exploiting the insecure employment status of the interviewee. While the first level was regarded as part of the nature of the employment status and it was regarded as somehow legitimate, the other two were regarded as forms of discrimination and they were openly labelled as unfair. The concept of *ricattabilità* helps explain why, despite the experience of a disadvantage even in areas where equal treatment is established by law, the interviewees tended not to react against it.

In its mildest version, common among the majority of interviewees in both countries, the limited bargaining power translated into a continuous psychological pressure to do one's best all the time, in the hope to see their contract renewed. This has already been highlighted by several authors in the precariousness literature (see, for instance, Fullin, 2004; Pocock et al., 2005; McKay and Markova, 2010) and also in the organisational psychology literature (e.g. Mauno et al., 2005). Staufenbiel and König (2010) highlighted that when workers see possibilities of being hired permanently they will put more effort in their job in order to obtain

the permanent contract, while if there is no possibility of being hired permanently, workers might engage in behaviour that will try to reduce the perceived disadvantage by, for instance, putting less effort or being absent at work. Nonetheless, contrary to what might have been expected, the situation was not confined to those employed to be ‘screened’ for permanent hiring or the ‘precariously stable’. In fact, even some of those employed as ‘buffers’ were hoping to make a good impression on the hirer, so that they could be re-assigned to the same hirer should the hirer need a person for a future assignment. Moreover, they wanted to make a good impression on the agency, through the positive feedback received from the hirer, which was perceived to increase their opportunities to be called by the agency for other assignments in the future.

Although this implicit pressure in doing one’s best cannot be regarded as a negative incentive *per se*, as we might expect all employees to do as best as they can in their jobs, it meant in the majority of cases agreeing to over-work and bearing working conditions which would not have been accepted had the worker been employed on a permanent contract. These included, for instance, doing overtime whenever requested and accepting last-minute shift changes when asked for. As Mariangela, 30, who was employed on a 3-month contract in a supermarket, explains, *‘You have to be available in the first 3 months, you have to do the ‘bella figura’. To me it happened more than once that they called me at 7.30 pm or 8 pm to change my shift for the next day, and you had to be willing to do these things’*. Even accepting to work more than they would have been set by their contract was a common consequence of the felt pressure to show to the hirer they were suitable for the job and that they were ‘hard workers’. Similar attitudes have been highlighted, for instance, by McKay and Markova (2010), who studied TAW in the UK. They found that TA workers have to show they are obedient and that they do not create problems in order to be kept or be called in the future.

In that respect, in both countries, having a permanent contract was seen as a way of gaining individual bargaining power and of being able to better negotiate workload and other working conditions without the threat of not seeing their contract renewed. This would have enabled a re-balancing of power relations between hirer and worker, which was perceived as enabling better working conditions. This was clearly stated, for instance, by Steven, 35, *‘In terms of workloads, if I were permanent, I could think of calling the line-manager or go to the Director to mention the issue but...’*. Or as Claudia commented on the behaviour of one of her TA co-workers who finally managed to secure a permanent contract:

At the beginning he had 2-month contracts, 1-month contracts and so on, and he did almost everything. He did work from 7 o’clock in the morning till 7 o’clock in the evening, he clocked into a department, he clocked into another one, he went two hours

here, three hours there, he did everything to get it [permanent contract]! Now he can breathe, he got the permanent contract and now he stands up for himself a little, but before he was accepting everything.

Or, as explained by a trade unionist in the UK, *'It's also the fear that if I speak up, will I get fired? I have encountered a lot of people who are scared of speaking up, of saying, or complaining about things at all'* (Trade Unionist 2, UK). This pressure was particularly felt by those who had been employed by the same hirer for a longer time and who were hoping to be made permanent in the future, or at least to see their contract renewed. In those cases, the pressure was further heightened by peer competition with other TA co-workers, especially when it was known that only a limited number of TA workers were going to be renewed or when there were only a few permanent positions available at the workplace. This resulted in tensions among co-workers and in a spiraling upward trend in workload and a downward trend in the quality of working conditions. Thus, this pressure to make a good impression did not act only at the individual level but, whenever there were other TA workers competing for the same job positions, it resulted in social pressure towards maximisation of individual effort. These findings confirm what previously argued by several authors within the precariousness literature (e.g. Pocock et al., 2005; Pedaci, 2007) who found an increased sense of competition among workers in temporary employment.

It can be argued that this can be potentially used by employers as a divide and conquer strategy, creating competition instead of collaboration among the temporary workforce, but also between the standard and temporary workforce, with the former feeling the pressure of not being competed out by temporary workers. This possible strategy was also emphasised by a trade unionist in the UK who commented, *'it is a huge weapon in the hands of the hirer!'* (Trade Unionist, 1, UK). This argument had already been discussed by radical theorists in the 1970s as regards labour market segmentation in mature industrial economies within a Marxist perspective (see Reich et al., 1973), who claimed that employers voluntarily divide the workforce to increase competition. It has however been ignored in more recent dualist discourses, who have downplayed the strategies employers might pursue in increasing workers' productivity. Among authors from the organisational literature, Uzzi and Barsness (1998) highlight the use of temporary contracts as a possible strategy by employers to reduce conflicts at the workplace and to increase workers' compliance. This situation appeared to be more serious in Italy, where the economy was still in recession and employment opportunities were scant in a context of rising unemployment. Furthermore, considering that Bologna was a relatively well-off city in the Italian context in terms of unemployment rate, we might expect

the situation to be much more severe in other areas of the country with higher unemployment rates and slacker labour markets.

The possibility of not being employed in the future did not only affect working time and workload. A significant minority of workers in both countries (8 in the UK and 6 in Italy) went to work even when sick, in order not to reduce the chances to have their contract renewed, or to be re-employed by the same agency. By going to work when sick they could show they were 'hardworking', increasing the hirer's incentive to keep them or the agency to re-employ them. This was generally perceived as a significant disadvantage, but which could not be avoided given their limited bargaining power. *'I never stayed home sick, I went to work even with a slight temperature, I felt, I felt I didn't want to miss [work], as I feared of being left without work'* (Mariangela). *'Colds and coughs and all those things, you might take a day off to recover so that you don't make everyone else sick, but I just power through'* (Claire). This threat was not only due to the workers' abstract fears but it was often solicited by hirers' practices. As Paolo commented, *'I was never on sick leave, but a colleague of mine who claimed his sick leave in the first month [of assignment], he did not get renewed until December'*. Thus, having a permanent contract was perceived as the only way to avoid this pressure and being able to take sick leave when ill.

Hence, although TA workers are legally entitled to equal treatment with regard to sick leave compared to standard employees, in practice this was not always the case. The comparison between the possibility to claim sick leave as a TA worker and as a permanent worker was ironically commented by an Italian trade unionist, *'They [the hirers] ask you 'Now that you have been made permanent you got ill immediately, how come before you never got ill?' This is not a joke, I'm being serious!'* (Trade Unionist 2, Italy). It has to be specified that, although the perceived impossibility to take sick leave were more common for people who had been employed for relatively short periods, this situation was not confined to them. Moreover, in the British case, as we will see in chapter 7, section 7.4, the difficulties in taking sick leave were further complicated by the limited income protection provided to TA workers during sickness, creating a cumulative disadvantage in cases of sickness.

Furthermore, in two cases, one in each country, a chronic health condition and a disability were hidden from the hirer for the same reason. These two workers did not want to jeopardise their contract renewal and they did not want to mention their problem to the agency to avoid not to be called in the future for an assignment. Although anti-discrimination policies are in place in both countries, they were not thought to provide adequate protection, as the actual

practices of hirers were perceived to easily circumvent those regulations. For instance, Francesca suffers from a relatively rare chronic health issue⁴⁶ for which she had to receive a treatment at the hospital on a monthly basis. However, as the hospital only provided the service during working hours, she did not wish to ask the hirer for sick leave for those days, as she was worried about the renewal of her contract. Instead, she opted for having the treatment administered to her by a friend who is a nurse, which is formally illegal and considered to be of high risk. As she pointed out:

It is a big problem! Yes, I could take sick leave, but I am already sick because of this health issue, I cannot also ask for that [...] And I cannot say I have [the health issue] because that would be a good reason to lay me off.

A partly different example is the one of Andrew, who suffers from a mild disability as he is dyspraxic and dyscalculic, and who also decided to hide this from his hirer, to avoid jeopardising his employment position. As he commented,

I have a mild disability, I have dyspraxia. And also I have dyscalculia, which is a disability regarding maths and numeracy, and I've not really been able to tell my hirers about that. It's a kind of contradictory situation – if I was to be honest with them, I probably wouldn't be hired, or I might get fired; if I told them after, I'd be hired, but if I don't tell them, it means I have to cover it up and pretend that it doesn't exist.

Thus, even where equal treatment policies are present and anti-discrimination legislation provides formal protection against discriminatory practices, these workers refrained from exercising those rights for fear of hampering their employment prospects. Therefore, their condition of *ricattabilità* can be argued to contribute to worsening their working conditions compared with those of standard workers, who enjoyed comparatively higher individual bargaining power because of their more secure employment status.

Furthermore, the limited bargaining power did not manifest itself only implicitly through the objective power imbalance created by the insecure employment status of the interviewees. At a second level of *ricattabilità*, hirers and line managers explicitly referred to the possibility of stabilisation and to contract renewals in order to exercise control over TA workers. In those cases, which were experienced by six interviewees (two in the UK and four in Italy), we can talk about explicit blackmailing by hirers and line managers based on the employment status of workers. This was perceived as a form of abuse by the interviewees, who considered this behaviour very unfair. For instance, Alberto shared the case of a colleague, who was employed on a 32-hour weekly contract and who did not go to work on a Friday, as he had already

⁴⁶ The health condition from which she suffers will not be mentioned to avoid the person from being recognisable.

completed his contractual weekly hours, *'The line manager said, "Why didn't you come [on Friday]? Do you know that your contract is expiring?" Do you think is this something he should say?'*. Or Andrew, who claimed, *'They've said to me, you'd better behave or you won't be kept any longer than a year!'*. Hence, hirers and line-managers used these threats to obtain more from the worker, being it more work effort, longer working time or better compliance. In those cases, the workers felt powerless in reacting to those threats, for fear of losing the job.

It can be said that in those cases, their temporary employment status was explicitly used at the workplace to control the workforce, an argument which was initially put forward in the segmentation literature, especially by radical theory (see, for instance, Reich et al., 1973), but which has been mostly ignored in the contemporary dualism literature. Nevertheless, a number of authors in the precariousness literature (e.g. Pedaci, 2010; McKay and Markova, 2010) have argued that the risk of being dismissed plays an important role as a disciplinary mechanism in the control of the temporary workforce. The way in which explicit references to the TA workers' employment status by line managers or hirers translated into a felt pressure was clearly explained by an Italian trade unionist:

You are much more liable to blackmailing, you can enforce your rights much less because, if you are asked to do some overtime and you answer 'No, sorry, tonight I cannot, I have already got something planned', [the hirer answers] 'OK, but be careful!'. What is triggered in the worker's head? That if you say no, the hirer will tell the temporary agency that you didn't do overtime or that you aren't willing to do overtime work and then you won't be working there anymore. These are perverse mechanisms which have spread out. (Trade Unionist 2, Italy)

At the third level of *ricattabilità*, which was found only in Italy in two cases, this imbalance in bargaining power resulted in outright abuses on the part of the hirer. These included the refusal to pay overtime or to respect formal working-time rules. These abuses were allowed in cases in which the hirer knew the workers were not willing to jeopardise their employment situation by claiming their legal rights. Given the limited availability of data, it is difficult to explain why cases of abuses were present only in Italy. A first, tentative explanation, could be related to the fact that more Italian TA workers were employed temporarily for long periods of time, seeing their prospects of being made permanent constantly delayed and hoping to become permanent at some point in the future (see chapter 5). Another explanation might be related to the economic cycle of the two countries. While, at the time of the interviews, the UK enjoyed moderate economic and employment growth (1.9% real GDP growth rate and -0.3% unemployment growth rate in 2013, EUROSTAT, 2017a; EUROSTAT, 2017b), Italy was experiencing a prolonged economic recession and a deteriorating employment situation (-1.7% real GDP growth rate and 1.4% unemployment growth rate in 2013, EUROSTAT,

2017a; EUROSTAT, 2017b). It can thus be argued that job opportunities in the Italian case were much fewer, and this further strengthened the hirers' power vis-à-vis TA workers, allowing for situations of abuse of power. Nevertheless, these are only tentative explanations and further research would be needed in order to uncover the reasons between the cross-country differences.

Nevertheless, being a TA worker did not translate as perceived lower bargaining power for all interviewees. In five cases, (two in Italy and three the UK), TAW was perceived as increasing the workers' bargaining position vis-à-vis the hirer and limited the amount of pressure workers experienced in a job. These included all but one case where the interviewees were employed as a 'buffer', in relatively short assignments and when they knew their contract was not going to be renewed. Hence, they knew that no matter the effort put into the job, there were no possibility or renewal or stabilisation. In these cases, the workers stated that a TA contract gave them more bargaining power, as they were allowed to quit whenever they thought the working conditions were not appealing to them, given that the job was of limited duration anyway. This experience has already been highlighted by some scholars in the organisational psychology literature (see, for instance, Staufenbiel and König, 2010), who claim that reduced bargaining power is only perceived when workers are hoping to increase their future employment opportunities. Furthermore, the economic support of other family members (either the partner or the parents) in the case of unemployment proved to be an important factor behind the workers' perception of strength in bargaining power, as workers did not fear the loss of income in case the contract ended.

In conclusion, both in Italy and in the UK, individual bargaining power appeared to be negatively affected by the interviewees' employment status. In particular, this appeared related to the possibilities of future employment. The hirer's power to decide about the continuation of the employment relationship and the agency's power to re-employ the workers on other assignments put TA workers in a weak bargaining position and this was experienced as a source of disadvantage compared to standard employees. The consequences of the limited bargaining power took many different forms in the experiences of the interviewees, ranging from the felt pressure to always do one's best, to outright abuse of workers' rights. What is relevant in the comparison with institutional divides is that the limited bargaining power hampered the ability of many interviewees to claim rights which are guaranteed by law. Thus, the analysis of the experience of TA workers revealed how, in both countries, formal equality between standard and TA workers or small institutional disadvantages were experienced as a serious divide at the workplace, given the weakened position in exercising those rights.

Therefore, it can be argued that even where no formal institutional divide is present, the weaker bargaining position prevented these workers from achieving full equality in the workplace, hampering the possibilities of enforcing those rights in practice.

Furthermore, it can be argued that disadvantages in their employment experience, particularly when it comes to employment security, spilled over into a weaker power position which affected their working conditions. Both in Italy and in the UK, becoming permanent was seen as the only way to re-balance power relations, as the security of the employment contract limited the hirer's bargaining power and greatly reduced the liability to be blackmailed. In that respect, it can be argued that in those cases, TA workers suffered from a cumulative disadvantage, as their insecure employment status negatively influenced their ability to improve their working conditions, given the lower bargaining power it provided.

While the disadvantage in bargaining power was found in both countries, TA workers in the Italian case appeared to be worse off compared to their British counterparts, as they found themselves in a weaker bargaining position and a minority of them was subjected to outright abuse of the hirer's power. Although a full explanation of this difference would need further investigation, a tentative one might be found in the fact that TA workers in Italy tended to be employed for longer time periods and experienced many more renewals with the same hirer. Furthermore, the contrasting economic situations of the two countries in the period in which interviews were carried out may also have played a role. The more limited availability of other job opportunities made the workers in Italy more reluctant to go against their hirer as the cost opportunity of losing the job was higher.

6.4 Collective Representation

Individual bargaining was not the only field in which TA workers experienced a weak power position. As is argued in this section, in both countries, TA workers presented multiple disadvantages compared to standard workers in collective representation and bargaining. As has been discussed in chapter 4, section 4.6, the two countries have different employment relations system and collective representation of TA workers is organised in different ways. In the UK, there is no union specifically representing TA workers or, more generally, atypical workers, in a context in which unions have limited power in influencing decisions at the workplace. Collective bargaining is decentralised, un-coordinated and it covers only a limited share of the workforce (Arrowsmith, 2009; Voss et al., 2013). By contrast, in Italy, each of the main trade union confederations has created a union specifically representing atypical workers.

Collective bargaining is comparatively coordinated and it covers large part of the workforce. At the firm level, unions, at least among medium and large employers, tend to have comparatively high bargaining power, but bargaining generally happens between the employer and the sectoral union (Burroni and Carrieri, 2011; Benassi and Vlandas, 2015). Nevertheless, as we will see, this different organisation of collective representation was not reflected in systematically different experiences among the interviewees.

The overwhelming majority of interviewees in both countries were not members of a trade union. This is in accordance with previous empirical findings (e.g. Vandaele and Leschke, 2010; Pedaci, 2010; Benatti and Vlandas, 2015; Pulignano et al., 2016). What was relevant to investigate were the reasons why the interviewees were not part of a trade union. While some of the reasons for not being a member of a trade union could be similar to those of standard workers, others are clearly linked to the specific employment status of the interviewees. Some of the most common reasons mentioned by the interviewees were not different from those we might have expected from workers on a standard contract. In both Italy and the UK, three main reasons emerged: ideological position against trade unions, indifference towards trade unions and perceptions that unions were not helpful. This is again in line with previous findings in the literature (e.g. Bryson and Freeman, 2006; Burroni and Carrieri, 2011). Specifically, 12 interviewees (five in Italy and seven in the UK) were quite skeptical towards trade unions and they did not trust their role in the labour market, mostly because of their supposed political affiliation. Instead, nine interviewees mentioned their limited knowledge about trade unions and their lack of interest for and awareness of trade unions. *'Never joined. I've never... it's never come into my mind. I don't really know...'* (Tom). *'I've never joined, I don't know, I've never thought about it, to be honest.'* (Giada). This lack of interest towards trade unions appeared to be more prominent among the younger cohorts, who have more limited experience of trade unions as a source of collective representation.

Furthermore, the distance towards trade unions was partly explained by trade unionists both in Italy and in the UK as a general cultural shift towards individualisation, which emphasises self-reliance instead of collective solidarity. This was argued to have undermined the sense of collective representation, making workers reluctant to rely on trade unions for help. This was also in line with what has been previously argued in the literature (e.g. Vandaele and Leschke, 2010; Hänninen et al., 2013), seeing a more individualistic attitude among workers as a contributing reason for the decline in collective representation among all workers. A further reason which was mentioned in nine cases (three in Italy and six in the UK), was the perception of trade unions as not being useful in the current workplace. This was particularly common

for those who had been employed by small hirers, with only a few employees. In those cases, union representatives were generally not present and most co-workers were not members of a trade union. This is also in accordance with previous studies (see, for example, Vandaele and Leschke, 2010), which found a lower unionisation rate in small and medium-sized firms. Furthermore, in the UK, the lack of recognition of unions by some hirers, caused union membership to be perceived as useless, given the lack of opportunity for negotiation with those hirers. All these reasons can be argued to mirror general workers' attitudes towards trade unions, without highlighting any aspect which could be directly attributed to the fact of being a TA worker.

Nevertheless, both in Italy and in the UK, other reasons could be specifically attributed to the interviewees' employment status. Firstly, following the discussion from the previous section, *'ricattabilità'* appeared an important reason for why TA workers refrained from joining a union in both countries, though this has often been ignored in both the dualism literature and in the revitalisation literature, with a few exceptions (e.g. Gumbrell-McCormick, 2011). The majority of them felt that joining a union could hamper any prospects of stabilisation or simply the assignment renewal. This was confirmed by trade unionists in both countries. *'They will never fight their hirers because they can be dismissed anytime which is a huge weapon for a hirer'* (Trade Unionist 2, UK). *'Along those very long precarious paths, workers are unapproachable, they will never go against their hirer'* (Trade Unionist 1, Italy). Thus, as already highlighted in the precariousness literature (see, for instance, Magatti and Fullin, 2002, Pedaci, 2007; Hatton, 2014) the insecure employment status translated into an unwillingness to join a union in order not to be seen as a 'troublemaker' by either the hirer or the agency.

In both countries, even when it came to meetings organised by unions or other collective representation events, TA workers and other temporary workers were much less likely to participate than permanent workers, again because of liability to blackmailing. This was clearly explained by a trade unionist in Italy, who in vain tried to convince TA workers to participate in a trade union meeting:

[I asked] "why don't you come to the meeting?" "Well, if I come to the assembly I am seen to go listening to what the trade union says, and what if then they don't call me anymore?" [...] So even in this case there's the impossibility to claim a right. (Trade Unionist 2, Italy)

Hence, the risk of hampering their employment prospects contributed to preventing workers from joining trade unions, further weakening their bargaining position. It can be argued that employment precariousness translated into the inability to be collectively represented, a situation which was also found when it came to individual representation (see section 6.3 of

this chapter). Once again, we can see how a disadvantage in the employment experience spills over into a disadvantage in the working experience, given the more limited power to represent their interests collectively.

A second reason, already highlighted by other authors (e.g. Vandaele and Leschke, 2010), was related to the monetary expenses of trade union membership. As we will see in detail in the next chapter (see chapter 7, section 7.2), income insecurity due to the employment status made workers in both countries unwilling to incur in extra expenses, in order to save income in case of unemployment. This also meant not joining a trade union in order not to pay the union fees. As explicitly mentioned by Fabio, *'I'm not a member because, until I don't get a stable job, in the end, even those few euros that go to the union, they come handy in my pockets'*. Many unions both in Italy and in the UK have developed discounted fees for atypical workers, workers on low income and the unemployed and this, according to the trade unionists interviewed, seemed to have proved successful both in terms of recruitment and retention. Nevertheless, I did not analyse data of trade union membership among these employment categories to provide adequate evidence for this. What could instead be argued is that at times, even the lower union membership fees proved a barrier to joining a union for four interviewees, or at least contributed to disincentivising membership. Also in this case we can see how a disadvantage in one dimension (e.g. income) spills over into disadvantage in another (e.g. collective representation).

Furthermore, as previously underlined by Gumbrell-McCormick (2011), the scarce economic resources atypical workers are bringing in compared to the amount of work they require created also a disincentive on the union side to recruit these workers. As argued by trade unionists both in Italy and in the UK, *'It isn't economical for unions to have, so that's the biggest problem unions have is that you don't like to make a big effort to recruit temp workers, cause they require more services'* (Trade Unionist 1, UK). *'There's a lot of work to be done and with very few resources'* (Trade Unionist 2, Italy). Therefore, the monetary aspect of union membership appeared to act as a disincentive both for TA workers and for unions in terms of membership and recruitment, acting as a further factor in reducing opportunities for collective representation for atypical workers.

A third reason was related to the instability of their job position affecting the 'precariously unstable' in both countries. Given the continuous changes of employment in this group of interviewees and the awareness that they might only be employed in a job for a limited period of time, they refrained from joining a union. This reason has often been highlighted in the literature studying unionisation among atypical workers (e.g. Burroni and Carrieri, 2011;

Gumbrell-McCormick, 2011). This reason appeared to be more common in the UK, where there is no union specifically representing TA workers. Workers in the UK felt less incentivised to join a union if they were uncertain they would work in the same job in the medium or long term. Also, from the unions' perspective, it is more difficult to both recruit and to retain TA workers, as most of them keep changing jobs with relatively high frequency. As argued by a British trade unionist, *'it's more difficult to organise people in work without a career or if not employed in the long, or at least medium term'* (Trade Unionist 2, UK). Hence, the frequent job changes among the 'precariously unstable' created another disincentive on both the workers' and unions' side for collective presentation. Moreover, as pointed out by Gumbrell-McCormick (2011), this meant that even in case TA workers joined a union, their membership might be short-lived as they might change job or even sector in a relatively short span of time. This problem appeared to have been partly overcome in the Italian case through the creation of union federations representing TA and other atypical workers. Therefore, in Italy, the union can represent the worker even when moving between different assignments, in a diverse range of occupations. Nevertheless, some workers in Italy still felt disincentivised, claiming that unions mostly represented standard workers. This leads us to the fourth reason of why TA workers did not join a union.

The final reason was related to the perception that unions at the workplace were for standard workers. In that respect, little difference existed between the two countries, notwithstanding the very different organisation of collective representation for TA workers. In the UK, TA workers explained that they might change not only job but also occupation quite frequently, and they found it difficult to find a union that could represent them. Moreover, within their current occupation, they did not find the unions particularly keen on representing their interests as TA workers. As Paul, 42, complained, *'a lot of people like me [...] don't wanna join, hourly paid people, hourly paid and casualised, specifically temporary, the union is for permanent staff, they don't care about us!'*. The trade unionists I interviewed were perfectly aware of the issue and they recognised that unions tended to privilege standard workers' interests. The main reasons for this were, on the one hand, the already mentioned difficulty in recruiting and retaining atypical workers and, on the other hand, the fact that, unlike standard workers, they were not expected to be working there 'for long', and they privileged the long-term interests of the standard workforce. Nevertheless, in recent years, many trade unions in the UK have started to address the issue of employment casualisation, aware that an increasing share of the workforce is employed through atypical contracts (Heery and Abbott, 2000; Heery, 2004). Nevertheless, as recognised by the trade unionists interviewed, the initiatives were in most cases still embryonal and need to be further developed in the future.

By contrast, in Italy, where unions specifically representing atypical workers exist, the issue was related to the more limited voice given to these unions compared with their sectoral counterparts. As I have already explained in chapter 4, section 4.6, unions are recognised to have greater bargaining power at the workplace compared to the UK, especially in medium and large firms. Nevertheless, collective bargaining at the workplace happens between the employer and the trade union representing the sector, while the trade union representing atypical workers can take part in the negotiation but in a more marginal position (Burroni and Carrieri, 2011). This represented a weakness in the experience of the interviewed workers, who felt in several workplaces as if their voice did not count, especially in those cases where the standard workers' and their interests diverged. In those cases, during company-level collective bargaining, it was the interests of standard workers which were privileged. An example will help illustrate the case. In a firm on the outskirts of Bologna, the employer had to cut costs and offered either to reduce the temporary workforce or to decrease the salary of all workers. In this case, during the negotiations with the union, it was decided to cut the temporary workforce, in order not to reduce the earnings of the standard workers. This was confirmed by both an interviewee and a trade union representative of the firm. Although this was the most striking example, several others were mentioned both by workers and by trade unionists.

Some authors have pointed out that unions in Italy have been involved in a process of stabilisation in several workplaces, bargaining to have temporary workers moved into standard employment (e.g. Burroni and Carrieri, 2011). Nevertheless, in a context of economic crisis where employers were keen to reduce their workforce, it appeared that unions tended to privilege the interests of their core constituency of standard workers, confirming a strategy which has already been highlighted by some scholars in the revitalisation literature (Cerviño, 2000; Durazzi, 2015). It appears that unions in the Italian context were perceived as pursuing what has been described as 'partial inclusion strategy' (Cerviño, 2000, p.10) or a strategy of 'selective inclusiveness' (Durazzi, 2015, p.26). Unions in Italy were experienced as unwilling to protect the interests of 'outsiders' if they clashed with those of 'insiders'. Therefore, it can be argued that the existence of trade unions representing atypical workers could not alter the representation divide they have compared to standard employees, given that standard workers are better represented in an employment context where unions tend to have generally more bargaining power compared to the UK, especially in medium and large firms.

All these reasons contributed to the low inclination to join a union among the interviewees in both countries. Moreover, they produced the paradoxical situation in which workers were

waiting to become standard to join a union. This was also confirmed by trade unionists in both countries, who further highlighted the issue that many workers who were union members while permanent, as soon as they became unemployed or atypical stopped being union members. As argued by a trade unionist in the UK, *'People who were on a permanent basis after they become unemployed or become casual workers think of leaving the union'* (Trade Unionist 1, UK). Or as claimed by a trade unionist in Italy (Trade Unionist 1, Italy):

We have seen situations in which workers who have always been members, and because the firm was in crisis and left them without work and they start working for agencies, they do not become members anymore! Although they were in the past...more than one case, more than one!

Having described the reasons for not joining the unions, it might be important to investigate why five interviewees (three in Italy and two in the UK) did actually join a union. It has to be highlighted that the majority of those who were trade union members, became such after having incurred in a problem of the workplace, including verbal abuse or a lack of transparency in payslips. In those cases, the union was perceived as the only organisation that could help them, protecting them from abuses and infringement of rights. This type of behaviour was confirmed by the trade unionists interviewed both in Italy and in the UK. This created a serious problem for the trade unions, who saw recruitment as closely associated with an immediate increase in workload and costs. This aggravated the problem of limited resources for a high workload already mentioned, given that TA workers provided little incoming resources to the unions but contributed to immediately increasing costs. This was regarded by unions in both countries as a further disincentive to recruiting TA workers.

Given these issues concerning being represented by a union, two workers in the UK and one in Italy decided to get in contact with alternative organisations which were seen to better suit their needs. The two organisations, one in Bologna and one in Edinburgh, were both linked to radical political movements, which addressed several problems beyond casualisation of employment, including a fight against poverty and inequality but also, in the Bologna case, environmental issues, and in the Edinburgh case, benefit sanctioning. Becoming a member of other, less institutionalised groups and organisations, which were felt as representing atypical workers' rights, has been highlighted by some scholars as a workers' strategy to find a form of collective representation failing more established channels (Choi and Mattoni, 2010; Della Porta et al., 2013; Vogiatzoglou, 2013). Nevertheless, both organisations lack a direct legitimisation at the workplace to represent those workers, mostly acting to raise public awareness on those issues through campaigning and demonstrations. They have no power to

bargain at the workplace and thus cannot directly improve the employment and working conditions of these workers.

In conclusion, in both countries, TA workers faced multiple disadvantages in being collectively represented compared to standard workers. It can be argued that their employment status negatively affected their ability to be represented by a union, further reducing their opportunities to improve their employment and working conditions. One of the factors, common in both countries, was '*ricattabilità*' which, as we have already seen, played an important role in limiting the workers' individual bargaining power. The issue of *ricattabilità* has mostly been ignored in the dualism literature, which has focused prevalently on the relative stronger bargaining position of 'insiders', rather than on the weakened position of 'outsiders'. In that respect, the precariousness literature provides more valuable insights, highlighting that even where rights are formally guaranteed, they are not necessarily enforced in practice (Magatti and Fullin, 2002; Pedaci, 2010; McKay and Markova, 2010). Therefore, as already highlighted, even where no formal institutional divide was present, the employment status of TA workers engendered a difficulty in joining an organisation providing collective representation, further reducing the workers' bargaining power vis-à-vis standard workers.

Moreover, other factors connected to either income insecurity (cost of union membership) or employment instability (difficulty to be represented in different occupations), show how a disadvantage in one employment-related dimension could spill over into a disadvantage in another dimension. In that respect, the existence of trade unions representing non-standard workers in Italy appears to have partly resolved the latter issue. We can argue that these workers faced a cumulative disadvantage, as the insecure employment status spilled over into a more limited possibility to be represented by a union, further increasing the divide with standard workers, who experienced higher employment security and, because of that, could access collective representation. In both countries, this produced the paradoxical situation in which workers tended to wait to join a union until they had achieved an employment status which already guaranteed higher employment and income security and more individual bargaining power.

A further relevant finding was that, both in Italy and in the UK, unions were perceived to privilege the representation of standard workers, and although this was due to the organisation of unions in the UK, which tend to be organised along occupational criteria, in Italy, where unions specifically representing atypical workers do exist, this was due to the more limited bargaining power of TA workers' unions compared to sectoral unions at the workplace. As already mentioned, these findings are in line with what has been previously argued by some

authors in the revitalisation literature (Cerviño, 2000; Durazzi, 2015), who have argued that unions protect ‘outsiders’ only as long as it does not negatively affect their core constituency of ‘insiders’. Nevertheless, it can also be argued to reflect hypotheses from the dualism literature (e.g. Rueda, 2007; Palier and Thelen, 2010), given that unions are perceived to be protecting the interests of standard workers at the expense of TA workers. In that respect, workers in neither country were experiencing a larger divide in collective representation compared to the other, as both presented similar obstacles to joining a union and both perceived unions as a bargaining tool for standard workers, which marginalised them, despite the different organisation of collective representation in Italy and the UK.

6.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that both in Italy and in the UK TA workers experienced multiple disadvantages at the workplace compared to standard workers. These disadvantages, such as in pay, working time, job content and relations with colleagues, did not generally stem from disadvantages created by the institutional regulations, but from social practices at the workplace where TA workers were either openly discriminated against because of their employment status or where the fact that they were often the ‘newly arrived’, especially among the ‘precariously unstable’, put them at the bottom of an unwritten social hierarchy. It has to be again emphasised that only a minority of workplaces presented those forms of discrimination, but, given the numerous changes of jobs among the ‘precariously unstable’, the majority of interviewees experienced some form of discrimination in one or more workplaces. In that respect, no systematic difference could be identified between the two countries, as similar discriminatory practices were present. Moreover, the intrinsic characteristics of TAW, such as the fact that it was often used as a ‘buffer’ or the fact that the workers frequently changed workplaces, also contributed to fostering a divide between them and standard workers. It has to be specified that while the open forms of discrimination were regarded as unfair, the disadvantages related to their frequent job changes were considered part of the nature of their form of employment and they were thus regarded as at least partly legitimate.

It can be argued that despite formal equal treatment guaranteed by the institutional framework in the two countries, the employment status was experienced as a source of division between TA and standard workers. Other factors played a significant role in shaping this divide, ones which have been generally ignored in the dualism literature. In that respect, insights from the precariousness literature have allowed for a better informed picture of the actual disadvantages

experienced by TA workers at the workplace, also contributing to highlighting differences within the sample. In that respect, rather than between countries, differences in the experience could be identified based on the length of the work experience, which brings us back to the earlier distinction between the 'precariously unstable' and the 'precariously stable'. The shorter the work experience, the more likely the disadvantage experienced by the interviewee. As we have seen, this applied to annual leave, relations with colleagues and job content. In this context, the 'precariously unstable' appeared to experience more serious disadvantages compared to the 'precariously stable'.

Furthermore, these disadvantages at the workplace were complemented in some cases by other disadvantages related to the job position rather than the employment contract. We have seen this to be the case, for instance, when it came working time and job content, were TA workers were more likely to be working unsocial hours or doing more unpleasant tasks. Although this does not stem from the employment contract, the literature has found that TA and, more generally, atypical workers are disproportionally employed in jobs and occupations where working conditions are comparatively poor (see, for instance, Letourneux, 1998; Goudswaard and de Nanteuil, 2000; Felstead and Gallie, 2004). Contrary to many of the previous practices, these were not perceived as forms of unfair treatment. However, this may foster a cumulative disadvantage, where TA workers are employed in jobs with poorer working conditions and where their employment status contributes to them worsening further. In that respect, it can be argued that TA workers experience a combination of an absolute and a relative disadvantage due, respectively, to the types of occupations they are more likely to be employed in and to their employment status.

These disadvantages in working conditions brought us to discuss the bargaining power workers had in improving their working and employment conditions. As we have seen, the '*ricattabilità*', or liability to be blackmailed as it can be translated, constituted the main factor behind the limited individual bargaining power of these workers and it also played a significant role in discouraging them from being represented by a trade union. Here, the analysis of their individual experience revealed that even where formal equality between standard and TA workers exists, the latter have generally much less power to have their rights enforced and this translates into an experienced disadvantage in practice. Therefore, the weaker bargaining power contributed to shaping the divide in working conditions between them and their standard co-workers, a disadvantage which does not stem from an institutional divide but still has its source in the different employment status. Once again, it can be argued that these workers were presented with a cumulative disadvantage, given that employment

precariousness caused not only a divide between TA and standard workers in working conditions, but also provided them with less individual and collective power to counteract this divide.

A difference emerged between those who were hoping to secure employment opportunities in the future, such as seeing their contract renewed, being called for other assignments from the agency, or securing a permanent position, and those who knew their job experience did not provide any future employment prospect. In the latter case, the temporary nature of the job actually increased the perceived bargaining power. This categorisation has been highlighted by a number of authors in both the precariousness and the organisational psychology literature (e.g. Marler et al., 2002; Guest, 2004, Fullin, 2004).

Furthermore, TA workers experienced multiple disadvantages compared to standard workers in collective representation, it being more difficult for them to be represented by a trade union. Again, the employment status created some specific obstacles which hampered their ability to be collectively represented, further reducing their bargaining power vis-à-vis standard workers. This was similar both in the UK and in Italy, although the two countries feature different collective representation systems. Specifically, TA workers in both countries perceived unions to privilege the interests of standard workers. In the UK, this was due to the lack of existence of unions representing TA workers and with unions still hardly considering atypical workers' interests at the workplace. In Italy, the bargaining power of unions representing atypical workers was perceived as marginal compared to that of sectoral unions representing standard workers.

This is in line with the argument from the dualism literature that atypical workers feel less represented than standard workers (e.g. Rueda, 2007) but it can be said to be also in line with the argument brought forward by some authors of the revitalisation literature (e.g. Cerviño, 2000) which states that unions protect the interests of the outsiders only as long as they are not in conflict with the interests of insiders. However, the overall result was that TA workers did not feel adequately protected by the unions in either of the two countries and that they felt at a disadvantage compared to their standard co-workers, with no systematic difference between the two countries. The only significant difference emerging in the comparison between the two countries was that the existence of trade unions representing atypical workers in Italy facilitated the representation of the workers who frequently changed workplace or occupation, enabling the TA worker to be member of the same trade union despite job changes.

7. Income Protection Experience

7.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the income protection experience of TA workers. I first analyse the types of disadvantage experienced by TA workers in the two countries when it comes to income from employment. As is shown, the major difference in the experience was between the ‘precariously unstable’ and the ‘precariously stable’ rather than between the two countries, with the ‘precariously unstable’ experiencing the highest degree of income insecurity, being unable to have a secure income both in the short and in the long term. The following sections analyse the experience of income protection in order to understand how this contributed to shaping income insecurity, either in counteracting or in fostering it. The experience of income protection is discussed for three main social risks: unemployment, sickness and retirement. As already mentioned in chapter 3, section 3.4.3, these can be regarded as the main social risks which are experienced by the majority of workers at some point in their lifetime.

The analysis revealed a more complex picture of the disadvantages experienced by TA workers vis-à-vis standard workers compared to what we might have expected from institutional divides. More precisely, the experience of protection in case of unemployment shows that contribution-based benefits in Italy were perceived as inclusive despite a divide being present depending on the contribution history. At the same time, means-testing together with other features of labour market policies in the UK has fostered a perceived divide between benefit claimants and non-claimants. The experience of protection in case of sickness confirms the importance of access to contractual schemes in both countries, while at the same time it shows how an apparently minor characteristic of the statutory sick benefit in the UK produces a significant individual disadvantage. Finally, the experience of protection in retirement shows important differences between the two countries, reiterating the importance of access to occupational schemes in the UK context, while at the same time revealing common issues among TA workers both in Italy and in the UK.

The last part of the chapter discusses individual sources of protection, namely formal credit and the family. The analysis shows how, in both countries, income insecurity also fosters an inability to access formal credit as a source of income protection. By contrast, the family acts as an important source of income protection in both countries, but it plays a more significant role in the Italian rather than in the British context.

The chapter is structured as follows. Section 7.2 analyses the issue of income insecurity and how it is reflected in multiple interrelated disadvantages. The second part of the chapter considers the individual experience of income protection for a number of social risks. In particular, section 7.3 discusses protection in case of unemployment, both with respect to unemployment benefits (7.3.1) and redundancy pay (7.3.2). Section 7.4 describes income protection in case of sickness. Finally, section 7.5 discusses protection in the event of retirement, including both statutory and occupational schemes (section 7.5.1) and private pensions (section 7.5.2). Section 7.6 describes individual forms of income protection and how they contribute to the individual experience of integration/exclusion into/from the social system. In particular, it focuses on two providers of income protection: formal credit (section 7.6.1) and the family (section 7.6.2). Section 7.7 discusses the relevant conclusions.

7.2 The Experience of Income Insecurity

Not having stable income prospects was regarded as a serious problem by all interviewees in the two countries. Income insecurity was experienced with great anxiety by the majority of interviewees and all but one aimed to reach standard employment, which was seen as the main way to achieve a secure income in the long term. As we will see in the following paragraphs, this lack of income security took partly different forms depending on the employment path followed by the interviewees, rather than between countries.

Income insecurity affected workers similarly in both countries in many aspects of their life. For instance, many individual choices were strongly affected by the impossibility of making medium and long-term financial decisions and committing to long-term investments and payments, as already highlighted by several scholars in the precariousness literature (Pedaci, 2007; Bertolini, 2009; Armano, 2010). The major long-term investment from which workers felt excluded was the purchase of a house. Not only would it have been extremely difficult to get a mortgage from a financial institution because of their employment instability (see section 7.4.1, this chapter, for a detailed analysis on access to formal credit), but also workers themselves did not feel they could commit to such a long-term investment, as they might have not been able to pay mortgage instalments in the future, in case they lost their job and they were not able to secure another one straight away. Apart from buying a house, even renting a flat/house appeared to be difficult, as landlords often asked for a guarantor, as their insecure income prospects were considered unreliable. As we will see in section 7.6.2, workers had to rely on the partner or on other family members who would act as guarantors in order to rent accommodation.

Income insecurity also affected other important investments, such as buying a car, which was also often mentioned as an item interviewees were not able or they did not dare to purchase while temping. In Bryan's, 35, words:

You cannot get a mortgage as a temporary worker. And even if you could, you would have had to pay very high interest rates. And if I wanted a car, I couldn't get a loan for a car.

Or Rosanna's, 44:

I couldn't buy a car. No, how can you do it? And I wouldn't ask a loan from a bank, 'cause I don't have job security, I don't know if I will be able to pay! And then, what will I do?

Furthermore, for those who had been in an unemployment-employment cycle for several years and for some of the 'precariously stable', income insecurity affected important life choices. Three female interviewees (two Italian, one British) lamented the impossibility to raise a child. As Claire, 32, said, *'I'll tell you what, me and my partner have decided not to have a kid for now. It's simply not possible'*. And Francesca, 41, *'I could not become a mother. That is something that affects me deeply'*. Hence, a lack of income security influenced life decisions which require resources over long periods, as the interviewees did not feel they were able to sustain those given their uncertain income prospects. This reflects previous findings from authors studying precariousness (e.g. Bertolini, 2009, Modena and Sabatini, 2012), who have highlighted how important life decision are continuously postponed without a clear plan, waiting to find more stable employment which can guarantee a more secure source of income. It can be argued that income insecurity affects important life decisions which go beyond employment and which have long-term repercussions in the lives of the interviewees, of which, some, including the decision of having a child, cannot be postponed indefinitely. Overall, disadvantages in long-term life planning, in housing and in any long-term investment, appeared to be extremely similar in both countries as no systematic difference could be identified.

Among the 'precariously unstable' workers in the two countries, even more medium and short-term planning was often affected. For instance, the impossibility to go on holidays or to pursue hobbies and leisure activities was frequently mentioned, although its relative importance was perceived as lower compared to the above presented long-term investments. When temping, most extra money was saved, as people tended to protect themselves in case of unemployment (see section 7.3, this chapter, for a detailed analysis of this issue). Most unnecessary expenses were cut as the money might be needed in the future, in case their contract was not going to be renewed and it would have taken long to get another assignment. This was especially the

case for those employed in several short-term assignments. Among the most commonly cited forms of consumption given up were holidays and leisure activities (such as going to a restaurant or playing sport). As Claire explained:

So I have this little bit of savings which, at the moment, I can't even think about going anywhere near it, cause I might need it. So at the moment it could be money for my holiday, it could be money towards buying a flat, it could be all these exciting things, but it's not any of those things; it's just-in-case money, what if I don't have a job and need money to pay my share of the rent and my share of the bills. So it just sits there.

Or as explained by Fabio, 44:

You always have to cut here and there, in order to make sure that by the end of the month you don't have zero [money] in case your contract is not renewed.

On the same note, Chris, 30, remembered the things he could do at the time when he was permanent:

I was able to go on holiday, or go to visit things, or go and see things, and you know, pursue the hobby of being in plays and doing stuff like that.

As is discussed in depth in section 7.6.2, this chapter, these disadvantages in consumption could be partly compensated by provision of income from other household and family members, where this was available, helping workers cope with both regular expenses and long-term investments.

A partly different perception of income insecurity was found among the 'precariously stable' workers in the Italian context, who had been employed for several years by the same hirer, as they had regular employment income for several consecutive years. Workers in this group enjoyed income stability comparable to that of standard workers, being employed in the same job for many years. They did not renounce short-term expenses and they did not alter their consumption patterns because of their employment status. Nevertheless, as previously shown, they equally did not want to commit to long-term financial investments. As previously underlined by Della Ratta-Rinaldi et al. (2014), for these workers, the main disadvantage pertains to insecure income prospects in the long-run, given the uncertainty about contract renewal. Therefore, for workers in this group, income insecurity was closely related to uncertain income prospects for the future rather than to the present income situation. As we will see in the next few sections, this stability of income also allowed these workers easier access to other sources of income. Hence, although these workers could be regarded as 'trapped' in atypical employment (see chapter 5, section 5.3.4), exemplifying an employment divide between atypical and standard workers, their income situation can be argued to be better than that of the 'precariously unstable', given their higher income stability. It can be argued

that, for these workers, income insecurity presented partly different characteristics compared to the ‘precariously unstable’, once again highlighting the existence of two quite different experiences of ‘precariousness’, depending on the employment path.

Given these disadvantages related to income insecurity, it is hardly surprising that all but one of the interviewees were temping voluntarily. Apart from one interviewee, all saw standard employment as the only way to achieve income security, as this would have given them more income stability in the present and more stable income prospects for the future. The only exception was Mary, 44, who, after 22 years in a permanent job, decided to start temping and did that for a couple of years before being hired permanently. As she explained below, her choice was due to the fact that she could count on the savings accumulated in many years of standard employment and on a generous redundancy pay accrued at the end of that period, as well as her husband’s high earnings, a situation which can be regarded as exceptional in the sample.

I loved [temping], I loved that. I liked the fact that you were learning new things and that you were being taught things that you could take on to another job [...] No, I love that. I love that, but that’s just me. Because I had the money. If I didn’t land another temping job for 3 weeks, 4 weeks, it did not matter to us [her and her husband] at all because he was earning money and I had a nest egg, so it didn’t bother us but if you were a person who was relying on that money coming in every week, it’s a worry.

The availability of other sources of income was perceived as fundamental in order to be temping in the long term, as otherwise income insecurity obliged the interviewees to look for more stable employment. No interviewee without another form of private income support was found to be voluntarily temping, as they were all looking to secure a more stable position. This finding helps explain the fact that no difference could be found in the two countries as regards the willingness to secure permanent employment, which was already highlighted when discussing the employment experience (see chapter 5, section 5.3.1). Employment precariousness and income insecurity were the two main factors behind the desire to be in standard employment, regardless of the different levels of employment protection granted to standard employees in the two countries.

In conclusion, TA workers in both countries experienced income insecurity. This was perceived as a severe constraint on a series of choices which are regarded as normal and legitimate in their respective societies, but which many interviewees could not make, because they felt unable to make medium and especially long-term financial plans. In that respect, it can be argued that the income insecurity contributed to a sense of being an ‘outsider’ as they were unable to afford forms of consumption and investment but also individual life choices which are regarded as mainstream in contemporary societies. Furthermore, it shows that TA

workers experienced a disadvantage when it comes to income compared to standard workers and this helps explain their desire to secure standard employment (with one exception).

These findings go against initial hypotheses from the dualism literature, showing that the experience of income insecurity was partly similar in both countries and that TA workers in Italy do not experience higher insecurity. The only systematic difference in the experience of income insecurity could be found between the ‘precariously unstable’ and the ‘precariously stable’, who can be said to experience two partly different types of ‘precariousness’. On the one hand, both groups felt unable to commit resources over long periods as they did not have a stable source of income which can provide those resources. On the other hand, only ‘the precariously unstable’ minimised or eliminated most unnecessary and superfluous expenses, in order to save for periods of unemployment. They felt excluded from a range of consumption activities which were instead generally available to standard workers. To be sure, the situation was more severe for those who had been in an employment-unemployment cycle for several years, as they experienced a strain on consumption and saving decisions for several years. Thus, the ‘precariously unstable’ which were present in both countries, were the ones whose income situation was most different from that of standard workers, experiencing income disadvantages both in short-term and in the long-term financial decisions. Therefore, they can be regarded as the group with the largest income security divide compared to standard workers.

7.3 Income Protection in Case of Unemployment

7.3.1 Public Unemployment Benefits

Access to public income protection in case of unemployment varies deeply between the two countries (see chapter 4, section 4.7.1). While in Italy TA workers could rely on contribution-based unemployment benefits (UBs), for which tight contribution requirements are necessary, in the UK workers have access to both contribution-based UBs and income-based UBs in case they are in a low-income household (Clasen and Goerne, 2011; INPS, 2015a). Thus, while the British UB system grants access to income protection in principle to all the unemployed on a low income, the Italian UB system narrows access to income protection only to the unemployed with enough contribution records, which are tightly related to the individuals’ degree of labour market attachment in the years preceding unemployment⁴⁷. Furthermore,

⁴⁷ A worker has to have paid national insurance contributions for at least 2 years in her working life, and at least for 1 year in the 2 years before the unemployment claim (INPS, 2015a).

limited means-tested safety nets are provided for those who are not entitled to contributory-based benefits (Matsaganis et al, 2003; Jessoula et al., 2010). As we will see below, the characteristics of the UB system, and specifically the entitlement criteria, strongly contributed to shaping the individual experience of income protection during unemployment. However, the interviewees' experience only partly reflected hypotheses from the dualism literature as other factors other than institutional configurations contributed to shaping the perception of being at a disadvantage compared to standard workers. In particular, the interviewees' value system and the perceived 'targeting' of the UB system interacted with the public UB system's characteristics in shaping their perception of protection.

In Italy, as already mentioned, contribution requirements limited access to UBs only to workers with relatively long contribution records. However, this limitation was generally perceived as fair by the interviewees, as they considered reasonable that a person had to have worked a certain amount of time in order to be able to claim unemployment support. *'They [employment centre officers] should look at the employment history of a person, if the person has never worked, I don't find it right that she receives unemployment benefits'* (Michele, 39). *'When I worked 3 months in a year I didn't feel I should have been entitled to it'* (Rita, 36). *'It is ethically very good, otherwise we'd end up giving UBs to someone who does a summer job and then goes to high school'* (Alessandro, 33). Hence, the contributory requirements were perceived as an appropriate way of circumscribing income protection to actual 'workers' and not to people who never worked or worked only sporadically. This contributory limitation also reinforced the idea of entitlement once the person had paid sufficient contributions, as interviewees felt they earned the right to UBs. *'I knew it was my right, why not claim it?'* (Rita). *'I paid my contributions for them [...] why shouldn't I have asked for them?'* (Giulia, 41). People felt at ease in claiming those benefits as they felt they 'paid' for them, therefore they were owed them. Therefore, it can be argued that the contribution requirements for accessing UBs fostered an idea of deservingness among claimants, on the one hand circumscribing access only to 'actual workers' and by creating a direct connection between contribution paid and amount of benefit received.

Furthermore, the fact that UBs are earnings-related and the replacement rate is relatively high (75% of previous earnings up to 1180 euros per month and 25% for the exceeding earnings) was praised by the interviewees as it allowed a reasonable income while waiting to find another job or being employed on a different assignment. Also the duration⁴⁸ was generally perceived

⁴⁸ Variable with age, but a minimum of 8 months for workers below 50 years old and a maximum of 16 months in 2015 for workers above 55 years old.

as adequate by all claimants. *'The set-up and the amount are OK'* (Michele). *'The amount and duration are adequate'* (Alessandro). Moreover, in contrast to what we will see in the UK case, the bureaucratic procedures for claiming benefits were perceived as simple and not particularly burdensome.

Instead, what was strongly lamented was the lack of effective active labour market policies, as explained in chapter 5, section 5.5. Many interviewees felt that passive income support should be tied to active support, and that employment centres should actively help the unemployed seeking a job. As Michele claimed, *'I think that instead of paying [the worker] the benefit, they should give him incentives, helping him find a job'*, or Rita, who stated, *'In spite of giving benefits for so long, [...] it would be much more helpful to have helped find a job'*. Thus, according to the interviewees, activation measures tied to UBs, established formally by law but applied only patchily in practice (Gualmini and Rizza, 2011; Jessoula and Vesan, 2011), would be positively perceived by benefits claimants if fully implemented. The obligation to find a job would be offset by the right to use public services in job search and placement, which are now not available in practice, albeit formally existent.

Moreover, interviewees acknowledged that lack of activation requirements for fairly generous benefits could produce situations where the unemployed exploit the welfare system, and rely opportunistically on benefits without looking for jobs. However, reliance on state support could not last for more than the duration of the UBs. Therefore, only people who were certain or almost sure of being able to secure employment at least for a certain number of months in a year⁴⁹ were able to use those benefits in an opportunistic way. As Rita claims:

There are some people who live on benefits. They work for a few months [in seasonal jobs] and the rest of the year they live on benefits, 'cause they know they will have another [seasonal] contract the next year. [...] Even I did that when I was younger, at the time I enjoyed it, cause I was young and the less commitment the better, but now no.

Furthermore, the lack of a safety net of last resort for those who have not paid sufficient contributions or for those who have exhausted their UBs was strongly deplored. Indeed, Italy still lacks a national minimum income scheme and benefits such as social assistance are not generous, they are means-tested and they are managed by different institutions at the local level (Jessoula et al., 2010; Madama, 2010). These characteristics caused social assistance to be perceived as a completely different form of support compared to UBs, and it was thought of as reserved to a different kind of people, the very poor, rather than the unemployed. In the sample, no worker claimed social assistance after the expiration of UBs and many of them did

⁴⁹ The number of months depends on unemployment contributions, which should have been paid for no less than 12 months in the two years before the unemployment claim.

not know whether they would have been entitled to any income support. Hence, if on the one hand workers perceived a sense of fairness and deservingness in a contribution-based system of UBs, also praising the relative generosity of the benefit, they perceived the lack of a safety net of last resort as a severe problem, obliging them to rely only on their savings and on other family members.

The perception and use of UBs in the UK case was completely different from the Italian case. First of all, workers were discouraged from claiming JSA by the strict activation requirements and the bureaucratic processes associated with them. *'It's very hard to go back and claim unemployed benefit when you've been temping. [...] Because you have to prove that you didn't... that you're still actively looking for work'* (Mary, 44). *'It's a full-time job trying to get your benefits sorted out. Because the paperwork, and constantly having to justify yourself'* (Rachel). *'There was a lot of administration'* (Bryan). A second reason discouraging UB claims was the attitude of the Jobcentre Plus staff, which was perceived by the majority of people who claimed benefits as unhelpful. *'They're rude, they're not helpful, they're... I think they're under a lot of pressure from their managers and bosses.'* (Rachel, 43). *'They would kind of be skeptical of you, suspect of you'* (Andrew, 30). Or Catherine, 41, who told of the differentiated treatment received at the unemployment centre, depending on what she went there for:

The first floor [where you look for a job], and the ground floor [where you claim for benefits] are very different; [on the first floor] they cannot be more helpful, because I'm looking for work. [...] My last experience of going there was, they couldn't be nicer, the security guards everywhere – please come in, oh that's wonderful, you're applying for jobs, no hassle at all [...] But downstairs there are people looking miserable, you know, it was a very different... it's very interesting, very interesting experience.

Moreover, people were discouraged by the little amount of money they would get from UBs, which was not perceived as enough to live on. *'£71.70 every week is not a lot of money to live off, so there's a real downside to temping'* (Catherine). *'I got £70 a week, which was not enough to... you know, I owned my house so I paid a mortgage. If I rented, they would pay my rent, but they can't pay for you to own your own home'* (Bryan). People were indeed only entitled to a flat-rate £71.70 per week⁵⁰, which is 16% of the median income (GOV.UK, 2015a), although they could complement this with means-tested benefits, such as housing benefits. Thus, in contrast to what we have seen in the Italian case, the amount was not perceived as generally adequate and in many cases not worth the taxing procedure to claim UBs. Hence, many interviewees did not want to go through demanding administrative

⁵⁰ A lower rate applies to workers below 25 years old.

procedures and activation requirements for limited income support. This was even more the case for those ‘precariously unstable’ workers who experienced many short-term assignments, who might have been unemployed for only a few days or weeks in between different assignments. *‘It is 2 weeks before you can start claiming, and therefore you have to prove that you’ve been out of work for 2 weeks and looking for employment [...] And by that point I would be working again’* (Mhairi, 58). For these workers, having to go through burdensome claiming procedures for every short spell of unemployment was a serious problem, which strongly discouraged them from claiming UBs.

A further reason in the UK was the stigma associated with claiming benefits. Interviewees did not feel keen on claiming for benefits, as they were afraid of the possible stigmatisation associated with it. And when they did, they felt they needed to justify it, both to themselves and to others. As Susanne, 38, who claimed benefits, explained:

Some of my friends as well, you know, they were a bit ‘hmm,’ but I just kind of thought well I’ve paid, you know, I’ve worked since, I’d worked even when I was at school I worked part-time, you know, I have got a good work ethic [...] I’m still trying to justify it, so it’s a very emotional thing.

Or Andrew:

I felt the social stigma that was being put out about... this is not something you deserve... Well, among friends, family, the media, everything that’s being put out, and also yeah your experience at the Jobcentre.

Eleven other workers felt a form of stigmatisation associated with UBs, as they felt it was a form of support for the ‘poor’ or the ‘scroungers’ with which they did not want to be identified. As Bryan remembered:

I felt... I’d never applied for any benefits before, so it was a change for me, it was something that I was a little uncomfortable with because I preferred to work [...] so I claimed the Jobseekers Allowance benefits, and I had to go up to a Jobcentre in an area that’s not very... it’s not a very well-off area, so I felt a little bit uncomfortable.

The stigmatisation the interviewees associated with benefit claiming confirms findings from the analysis of the political and media discourse on ‘welfare dependency’ and ‘worklessness’ purported in the British context, where the use of means-tested benefits is portrayed as a form of dependency on the welfare system by ‘welfare scroungers’ or ‘shirkers’ (see, for instance, Wiggan, 2012; Larsen and Dejgaard, 2013; Fletcher et al., 2014). The structure of the benefit system, particularly the strong reliance on means-testing, has been argued to be an important factor in fostering stigma, as it creates a division between a majority who contribute through taxation, and a minority who rely on or are perceived to be abusing the benefit system (Larsen and Dejgaard, 2013). The stigma prevented many workers from taking up UBs even in periods

in which they would have needed them. Only in extreme situations, when under the pressure of limited financial resources and unable to find a job, did they reluctantly decide to claim UBs. *'I didn't have savings and, you know, my partner doesn't earn a lot of money anymore, so it was a little bit of a struggle. I think I've adapted—I think that's a key word, I've adapted'* (Catherine). Thus, it can be argued that the structure of UBs in association with a dominant political and media narrative on deservingness and on welfare dependency has engendered a perceived divide between benefit claimants and non-claimants, where the former are negatively portrayed as 'scroungers' or 'shirkers' and with which interviewees did not want to be identified, unless under extreme necessity.

In conclusion, the picture which emerged from the comparison between the individual experience of the Italian and the British unemployment protection system provides important insights about the relation between the characteristics of the institutional system and the individual experience of UBs. These findings partly refute the hypotheses formulated in the analytical framework, which expected contribution-based benefits to be experienced as more exclusionary, drawing a more complex picture in which the institutional characteristics of the UB system play an important role, which is however moulded by other individual and social factors.

Firstly, in analysing the individual experience of disadvantage in income protection, the supposed divide created by contribution-based compared to means-tested UBs is partly questioned. In the Italian context, contribution requirements were perceived as legitimate, and a lack of sufficient contributions as a fair reason for benefit exclusion. By contrast, relatively lax criteria for accessing means-tested benefits appeared to have contributed to attaching a stigma to UBs, which, in association with demanding activation requirements and bureaucratic procedures, reduced the perception of inclusiveness of those benefits, as interviewees did not want to be perceived by others or by themselves as dependent on welfare and unable to provide for themselves.

Thus, the experience of the interviewees goes against hypotheses from the dualism literature which expected a larger divide in a contribution-based than in a means-tested UB system, highlighting how the characteristics of the institutional system may shape perceptions in unexpected ways. The close connection between contribution paid and benefits received made the system perceived as for those 'deserving', while the means-tested criteria, the tight activation requirements and the attitude of the Jobcentre staff in the UK appeared to weaken the idea of 'deservingness' in the interviewees' perceptions. In addition, the characteristics of

the British UB system seem to have created a different kind of divide, that between benefit claimants and non-claimants. UBs in the UK were experienced as stigmatising, and targeted to a category of people interviewees did not want to be identified with, which were perceived as ‘outsiders’. This produced a situation in which interviewees were ashamed of claiming UBs and they either renounced or felt they had to justify claiming UBs both to themselves and their social network of friends and relatives.

Moreover, there appeared to be a perceived connection between benefit duration and opportunities for abuse in the use of UBs. While access to UBs in Italy is limited in duration, in the UK access to UBs is potentially unlimited in time⁵¹. Hence, while in the Italian case the unemployed could not rely for long on the social protection system as their benefit would expire in a matter of months, *de facto* providing the incentive to find a job before the benefit ends; in the UK, the unlimited duration of UBs might provide a disincentive to go back into employment, which has to be compensated through strict activation requirements. These different opportunities for abuse in the two countries shaped the interviewees’ perception of the legitimacy in the use of UBs, as the two UB systems provided different opportunities and constraints for those claimants who try to ‘abuse’ the system, with a perceived different ability of the two UB systems in circumscribing income protection only to ‘deserving’ claimants. Hence, in the case of UBs, the comparison between Italy and the UK showed how institutional divides in access to benefits are not necessarily reflected in the workers’ perceptions, as other factors, such as the idea of ‘deservingness’ and the fear of stigmatisation, played an even more important role in drawing divides between different categories of benefit recipients.

Finally, in the Italian case, the tight contributory requirements for UB entitlement, the earnings-related nature of the benefit and its duration made UBs, for those who met the entitlement criteria, the preferred form of income support of first resort. By contrast, in the UK, the high costs in terms of activation requirements, demanding bureaucratic procedures and stigmatisation, together with the limited flat-rate amount, all contributed to making UBs a residual form of income support in the eyes of the interviewees, to be generally used only when under significant financial strain and only as a complement to other sources of income. However, in accordance with initial hypotheses, what was strongly lamented in the Italian case was the inexistence of a safety net of last resort for those who are not entitled to UBs or those who have exhausted them together with the lack of effective active labour market policies. In fact, on the one hand, social assistance policies are still patchy and comparatively ungenerous

⁵¹ Provided that the claimant’s income sources fall below the means-tested threshold.

and no national minimum income scheme is present, leaving the long-term unemployed and the unemployed who are not entitled to UBs with limited sources of public support. On the other hand, the ineffective active labour market policies left the benefit claimant with no support in her employment search, but only with passive protection.

7.3.2 Redundancy Pay

Besides UBs, redundancy pay played an important role in providing income when unemployed. Redundancy pay represented a form of occupational income support that was mentioned surprisingly often by many interviewees as a significant form of protection, compared to the attention it has been given in the dualism literature. Access to redundancy pay was different in the two countries. TA workers in Italy had equal access to redundancy pay as they are legally regarded as employees. Moreover, all employees are entitled to redundancy pay, proportionally to the amount of time employed in a specific job (INPS, 2017d). By contrast, in the UK, only workers who have been employed for at least two years by the same employer are entitled to redundancy pay (GOV.UK, 2017a).

In Italy, TA workers did not experience any specific disadvantage compared to standard employees in accessing redundancy pay. What needed to be explored was the role of redundancy pay in mitigating loss of income due to unemployment. Redundancy pay appeared to be useful as an immediate form of income support received once unemployed, in the period immediately after finishing the assignment, even before the claim for UBs was processed by the employment centre. Redundancy pay was regarded as a quick and automatic protection immediately available once a contract was not renewed and it provided a ‘buffer’ income in case another assignment was not immediately available. Although the amount of money received strongly depended on the length of the assignment, the immediacy and automaticity of the payment were perceived as extremely useful, especially when spells of unemployment were short. For instance, Alessandro, who had several TA assignments lasting 3 months each, but who had not paid sufficient contributions to receive UBs, described the role of redundancy pay:

Every 3 months I had the TFR [redundancy pay], plus the unused holiday allowance [...] and of course you are not rich, but at least you can survive for a bit, as I was not entitled to unemployment benefits.

Even for those interviewees who had access to UBs, redundancy pay was experienced as a useful and complementary source of income in case of unemployment. For the ‘precariously stable’, who rarely if ever experienced unemployment, redundancy pay was used as a source

of income in the involuntary work breaks they experienced during changes of employment contract. Therefore, redundancy pay could either complement income from UBs or, for those who were not entitled to UBs, function as a partial substitute for them, providing in either case an important and immediate source of income protection in case of unemployment. However, Jessoula (2012) argues that Italian workers with irregular work histories, such as many TA workers, are not able to cumulate redundancy pay as most permanent workers do. Most permanent workers use redundancy pay as a saving device given that they will only access their redundancy pay after several years of work or only at the time of retirement, meaning that they can complement their pension with a generous lump-sum amount. By contrast, TA workers and other atypical workers with irregular working histories will, by the time of retirement, have used most of their redundancy pay and will therefore be presented with a cumulative disadvantage, both in pension and accumulated savings (see section 7.5 of this chapter, for a discussion on the use of redundancy pay for income protection in retirement).

In the UK, interviewees did not have access to redundancy pay. To be sure, here the divide appeared to be between workers who have relatively long tenure (over 2 years) and those who did not, rather than between individuals with different employment statuses. Nevertheless, the fact that all interviewees in the British case belonged to the ‘precariously unstable’ and none of them managed to be employed by the same agency continuously for two years, meant that these workers were disproportionately more disadvantaged than what we would expect to be the case for the majority of standard workers. Indeed, we might expect the latter to experience fewer unemployment spells and they might be able to accrue redundancy pay after two years of tenure. Lack of access to redundancy pay was experienced as a disadvantage especially in situations in which redundancy pay would have allowed a smoother transition from one assignment to the other (as the worker would be paid only in the week after her first week of assignment) or before the worker was able to receive unemployment benefits (generally after 2 weeks of becoming unemployed).

However, the interviews revealed that the strictness of redundancy rules was in line with the perception of redundancy pay by the TA workers. None of the workers in the UK felt they were excluded from the right to redundancy pay, as they felt they did not work for long enough to have ‘earned’ it. *‘I think redundancy is known as an official thing, where you had to be working there for a certain length of time, and I’d only been there 9 months’* (Tom, 31). Thus, it seems that the rule had been internalised into the TA workers’ mind-set, as they did not perceive the lack of access to redundancy pay as a form of exclusion, but a ‘deserved’ right for those who had been employed in a certain job for a number of years.

Overall, redundancy pay appeared to be perceived as an important source of income during unemployment for TA workers in the Italian case. Nevertheless, in the UK case, in which none of the interviewees were entitled to redundancy pay, the interviewees did not feel excluded, as they seemed to have internalised the norm that redundancy pay is reserved for long-term employment relations. Thus, although in the UK the lack of access to redundancy pay was experienced as an absolute disadvantage in that it would have provided a source of income protection in the short-term, it was not perceived as a form of exclusion from income protection, meaning that it was not perceived as a relative disadvantage compared to standard workers. Finally, it has to be highlighted that these findings show the importance of this form of occupational support for the income protection in case of unemployment. These findings question the predominant lack of interest given in the dualism literature to this form of protection, with a few exceptions (see, for instance, Seleeib-Kaiser, 2011). The lack of general interest does not appear to be justified in the light of the importance given to it by the interviewees. Hence, these findings show that more research should be carried out on this complementary form of income protection, as it plays an important role in the protection of the unemployed.

7.4 Income Protection in Case of Sickness

As already mentioned in chapter 4, section 4.5, while in Italy a TA worker is legally defined as an employee, in the UK context a TA worker is only defined as a worker, hence she has access only to statutory sick pay (SSP) but not to occupational sick pay, which is often provided by employers (Burchell et al., 1999; Böheim and Mühlberger, 2006; Voss et al., 2013). Therefore, a TA worker in Italy receives sick pay equivalent to that of a standard employee⁵², which is paid partly by the employer and partly by the public national insurance system⁵³. By contrast, in the UK, a TA worker is only entitled to flat-rate SSP⁵⁴, unless the hirer decides to discretionally provide contractual sick pay also to TA workers. Nevertheless, not all employees in the UK are entitled to contractual sick pay, as provision depends of the employer (Clasen, 2016). The experience of the workers confirmed hypotheses elaborated in

⁵² 100% of daily earnings for sick days 1-3 and after day 21, and 75% from day 4 to 20 (INPS, 2015h).

⁵³ SSP covers 50% of total sick pay from day 4; 66.7% from day 21, whilst occupational sick pay covers the rest.

⁵⁴ £86.70 per week, and only if she has earned at least £109 on average per week in the 8 weeks before she got sick.

the comparison of the institutional characteristics in the two countries (see chapter 4, section 4.7.2), showing no perceived disadvantage in Italy but a strong disadvantage in the UK.

In Italy, workers did not feel discriminated or experience any particular disadvantage in income protection against sickness compared to regular employees. *'I felt safeguarded, absolutely! Sheer protection'* (Rita). *'Never had any problem, really'* (Giulia). However, although workers were guaranteed full income protection in case of sickness, the limited employment protection made those at risk of not seeing their contract renewed feel obliged to go to work even when sick, as explained in chapter 6, section 6.3.

By contrast, in the UK, many interviewees complained about the fact that they were only entitled to SSP and about the way this benefit was designed. As expected from the hypothesis elaborated in the analysis of the protection in case of sickness in the UK, they felt excluded from contractual sick schemes, as this had negative consequences on their income protection. In fact, SSP kicks in only on the 4th day of consecutive illness, meaning that for diseases that are not serious (e.g. fever, cold, stomach ache, headache etc.), which were by far the most common among the interviewees, the TA worker is not covered by SSP⁵⁵. Not being covered by SSP in the first 3 days was perceived as a serious disadvantage, as they felt obliged to go to work even when sick, in order not to lose income. This was a very common issue, and seven interviewees openly complained about it, perceiving it as unfair. As Catherine remarked:

You only get statutory sick pay if you're off for four days or more, I think, which seems incredibly unfair – it's like, how can I plan how long I'm gonna be sick for? So you're not paid – if you don't go in, you don't get paid. So I've struggled myself into jobs before with a cold, because I wouldn't get paid.

Or Claire, who would have generally used holiday leave when sick not to lose income, but who was unable to do so recently:

I did actually slip and fall last week, on Tuesday, on the ice, and I landed flat on my back, and then I had to leave and I hadn't accrued enough annual leave, and I had a wedding to go to on the Friday, so last week I didn't work for about 12 and a half hours – I won't be paid for that 12 and a half hours, and normally if you have a slip and fall when you start work, you do get paid, and I could work from home or something, but no, I just couldn't get paid, cause I just wasn't here.

⁵⁵ To be precise, the worker could claim Employment Support Allowance (ESA) but none of the interviewees were aware of the possibility as ESA was perceived as a benefit for people with disabilities or long-term health issues, not for those in employment with short-term sicknesses.

Many other interviewees in the UK experienced the same problem and saw other colleagues employed through TAs struggle in a similar way. As Mary stated, talking about herself and Janet, a colleague of hers (also a TA worker):

You know you're not gonna get paid, so, you are a temp – unless you can afford to not get paid, you'll come in come death, you're on your deathbed. That happens too many times, because, you know, you don't get paid. [...] Janet's really, really ill and she's come in and we've had to send her home. And she's worried because she's not getting paid. So, when she's not here, she's not paid. So that's a worry because you don't get any financial support when you're temping.

It has to be highlighted that a few hirers voluntarily provided contractual sick pay also to TA workers, but this was not common in the sample. Nevertheless, no data could be found on whether this is representative of what happens throughout the country. Moreover, none of the interviewees in the sample had medium or long-term illnesses, so it has been difficult to properly assess whether the amount of money received with SSP (£86.70 per week) was enough to live on, or which kind of financial strain it caused. In addition, as in the Italian case, many TA workers, especially those on short-term assignments, felt obliged to go to work in order not to make a bad impression on hirers and to increase the chance of a contract renewal as explained in chapter 6, section 6.3.

These findings broadly support the hypotheses formulated in the analysis of institutional characteristics in Italy and the UK (see chapter 4, section 4.7.2). More specifically, they confirm that no divide in income protection in case of sickness was experienced in Italy while two interacting divides were experienced in the UK. Firstly, the divide in the UK stemmed not from the distinction between atypical and standard workers, but from between worker and employee, in that, as we have seen, directly-hired temporary employees in the UK may enjoy income protection equivalent to standard employees. By contrast, TA workers, as they are legally defined as workers but not as employees, only have access to SSP but not to contractual schemes, thus experiencing a relative disadvantage. This disadvantage was perceived as unfair by the interviewees, who felt they were being neglected take time off work although they had legitimate reasons. However, a second divide is also present, that between employers who provide contractual sick pay and those who do not. In that respect, TA workers in workplaces where no contractual sick scheme is provided to any worker did not experience a relative disadvantage compared to standard workers. However, they can both be regarded as 'outsiders' compared to workers whose employer provides contractual sick pay. On the contrary, the four interviewees whose employer was discretionally providing contractual sick pay also to TA workers, can be regarded as 'insiders', suggesting that the divide in income protection in case of sickness in the UK is not clear-cut, but it depends on both the employment

status and the employers' provisions. Therefore, it can be argued that in the UK two different divides interact with each other, providing differentiated forms of 'outsiderness' both among both atypical and standard workers.

A further important finding emerged from the interviews, that the disadvantage in income protection in the UK was due mostly to the specific design of the benefit, rather than to its overall structure. More precisely, the disadvantage stemmed from the fact the SSP is only available after the first 3 days of sickness, which implies that the TA worker has access to income protection only in case of medium or long-term sickness. This was often mentioned as a major disadvantage, as, on the one hand, the SSP design obliged some TA workers to struggle to work even when sick in order not to lose income, and on the other hand, they felt less protected than other employees, who were instead generally covered by occupational sick pay in case of short-term sickness. Certainly, SSP has the same timing structure in Italy, but the first three days in the Italian context are covered by contractual sick pay. This finding shows that rather than the overall structure of the benefit, it is a specific characteristic of the benefit which engenders a significant disadvantage for workers. This reminds us that more attention should be paid in the dualism literature to what can be regarded as micro-characteristics of a specific benefit instead of predominantly focusing on the macro-characteristics of the income protection system, as important divides might lie behind those features.

7.5 Income Protection in Retirement

TA workers' access to income protection in retirement tended to be limited in both countries and this was reflected in the interviewees' individual experience. Nevertheless, the problems workers experienced in the two countries were caused by different underlying institutional configurations. As shown in chapter 4, section 4.7.3, in Italy, protection against retirement has moved from a single-pillar to a multi-pillar system in recent decades, but the first pillar still plays a comparatively dominant role (Cesari et al., 2007; Natali and Stamati, 2013). TA workers pay contributions equal to those of standard employees in order to receive a (public) pension in retirement. Workers can also access occupational schemes, though the overall take-up rate is still comparatively low (Natali and Stamati, 2013). Thus, the risk of not receiving a decent pension in the Italian context stems from the irregular contributory history a worker might have, because of an intermittent employment career. In the UK, income protection in retirement is instead structured through a three-pillar pension system, composed of a flat-rate basic state pension, an earnings-related pension or an occupational one and a voluntary private pension (Natali, 2012). Although access to statutory pensions can be regarded as relatively

easy, given that limited contributions are required, the same does not hold for the occupational and the private schemes (Böheim and Mühlberger, 2006). In particular, TA workers, as they are not legally regarded as employees, are not entitled to the occupational pillar, although the situation will be changing in the future (see Pensions Act 2014). Thus, disadvantages in the UK context did not only stem from periods of unemployment throughout the working history, but also from lack of access to occupational pension schemes when employed.

As we will see below, the workers' experience strongly reflected those institutional divides. While in Italy the disadvantages came mostly from the irregular working history of the 'precariously unstable', in the UK the disadvantages stemmed both from an irregular working history but also, and more prominently, from a lack of access to occupational schemes, in case the hirer was providing any. On the contrary, the 'precariously stable' in Italy experienced a limited disadvantage in income protection in retirement, given their regular contribution history. These findings produce a tripartite picture of disadvantages in income protection in retirement. On the one hand, the 'precariously stable' had limited disadvantages compared to standard workers. On the other hand, the 'precariously unstable' experienced a disadvantage only when not in employment in Italy, but both in employment and when unemployed in the UK.

7.5.1 Statutory and Occupational Pension Schemes

In both countries, among the 'precariously unstable', income protection in retirement was perceived as an issue, whose solution would be, however, dealt with in the not well defined future. *'Retirement? [laughs], What are we talking about? [...] I will never have a pension if I continue like this'* (Alessandro) or *'I don't really think about it [...] I know it's a problem, but I have other problems right now'* (Giada, 31). *'People forget that you need a pension, cause there's not gonna be a government pension – one day it's gonna just stop'* (Mary). *'Well, I simply do not think about it, not that I don't care, but it is not my main problem right now!'* (Kirsty, 32). Hence, interviewees were all aware of the limited income protection they would have access to in retirement, but they did not perceive it as an urgent issue. However, issue postponement was not only due by a myopic strategy, but also the current inability to solve, or at least improve, their future retirement issues. *'Retirement? I will never retire, I will probably have to work until I can. Not that I haven't thought about it, but what can I do?'* (Francesca). *'I do know it is an issue, but there's not much I can do right now'* (Tom). Workers in both countries felt powerless in their ability to influence their future retirement protection, as they did not feel they had financial means to improve their situation.

Aside from a common perception in the two countries of retirement as a ‘delayed’ issue which they could not deal with in the current situation, their experience presented significant differences. In the Italian context, the major worry was the spells of unemployment accumulated through the years. Legally, a person pays ‘figurative’ pension contributions while receiving UBs (INPS, 2016). However, as we have seen, not all workers were entitled to UBs and UBs are available only for the first few months of unemployment, as their duration is limited. Nevertheless, interviewees recognised that a TA contract at least granted them the same pension rights while in work as regular employees, a situation which was seen as a big advantage vis-à-vis other atypical contracts (such as co.co.pro.) which paid much less contributions than regular employment contracts. We can see here what we have already seen in the case of pay (chapter 6, section 6.2.1), that different atypical contracts provide different degrees of ‘inclusiveness’ and that grouping all atypical contracts together means oversimplifying a more complex situation in reality. The TA contract was perceived as a ‘better’ contract compared to other atypical contracts. Hence, while in employment, TA workers in Italy felt adequately protected, with the major preoccupations stemming from the periods of unemployment during which the worker did not pay full contributions to the public pension.

A different situation was that of the ‘precariously stable’ workers. These workers regularly paid pension contributions, given that their job continuity was roughly comparable to that of standard workers (see chapter 5, section 5.4.2) and that they did not perceive their retirement situation as problematic, having rarely if ever experienced unemployment. Only if they lost their job after many years with the same hirer, were they worried about the lack of contributions in case of long-term unemployment periods. In neither group, was access to an occupational pension scheme deemed essential to have adequate income protection in retirement and only one interviewee had joined an occupational scheme. This is notwithstanding the fact that some scholars, such as Jessoula (2012), have argued that only workers who have also contributed to supplementary schemes will, in the future, have access to a pension with an adequate replacement rate. Thus, the divide in income protection in retirement was only experienced by the ‘precariously unstable’ but not by the ‘precariously stable’, confirming hypotheses from the analysis of the institutional characteristics in Italy, which expected disadvantages in Italy to depend mostly on the contribution history.

In the UK, TA workers experienced partly different disadvantages compared to the Italian workers. The irregularity of the public pension contributions was also felt as a problem among British TA workers, but the fact that they did not have access to occupational pension schemes

was even more worrisome and it was generally perceived as unfair. Statutory pension is indeed low even for people who have contributed for more than 30 years (maximum £115.95 per week) and it is less than 26% of median income (GOV.UK, 2015c). Therefore, irregular and small contributions towards basic state pension made while working as TA worker were not seen as relevant to provide an adequate pension in retirement. As Mary ironically commented:

I think it was like £1.20 I was paying a week, I mean, what good is that gonna do me? I was like, please just give it to charity! I don't even want the lump sum when I leave you, because it's only like, I'm sure it was like £6.50 I'd made in the time, so I was like, no, don't bother. Don't embarrass yourself by telling me how much I didn't get.

In addition, the earnings-related state pension (S2P) was not perceived as generous enough to provide adequate income support in retirement. All interviewees in the UK were aware that the two public pensions they would receive would not be enough to live on and those who had an open-ended contract in the past tended to rely on the occupational scheme they had had when they were previously hired permanently, or they immediately enrolled into one once they secured a permanent contract. Like Edward, 54, who has now been hired permanently by the same hirer, explained:

No, there was no pension available to temporary staff, no. And then, as soon as I started here, again, well, as part of the package when I joined, was a letter detailing the pension plan, if you want to sign up, here we are, so..., which I immediately did.

Furthermore, even in the few situations where the hirer offered occupational schemes also to TA workers, the lack of security about how long they would be in that job, kept the interviewees from joining an occupational pension scheme, as they might have had to change employer after a few weeks or months. ‘*Because you're temping, you know that you're not gonna be in it for very long, so is it really worth it?*’ (Susanne). Therefore, if on the one hand there were institutional barriers to accessing occupational schemes, on the other hand, the precarious employment situation discouraged workers from joining occupational schemes even when available, given their irregular employment experience, a situation that we will see also when discussing access to formal credit (see section 7.6.1 of this chapter).

However, a recent reform to the British pension system (Pensions Act 2014) has introduced an auto-enrolment system for occupational pension schemes which is meant to expand access to occupational schemes to previously excluded workers. This reform, which has a phase-in period lasting until February 2018, extends occupational pension coverage to all TA workers. According to these new regulations, it is the agency, as the legal employer, which has to provide the occupational scheme to its workers. Therefore, the higher inclusivity provided by these new pension regulations is likely to improve the situation of TA workers within the next

few years, although it will not cover the periods before the implementation of the reform, for which the workers will still be at a disadvantage compared to standard workers.

In conclusion, in both countries the ‘precariously unstable’ workers did not feel adequately protected, nor were they trying to find a solution for the issue, partly because it was felt as a distant problem but partly also because people did not have the means to insure themselves against that risk. Despite this similarity, the problems experienced were only partly coinciding, as expected from the analysis of the institutional framework of protection in retirement. In accordance with the hypotheses, in both countries the irregular working history was perceived as a disadvantage. However, in Italy, the experienced disadvantage was confined to that, as TAW granted access to full pension rights, unlike other atypical contracts such as *parasubordinati*. By contrast, in the UK, besides the irregular contribution history, another problem was present. The exclusion from occupational schemes was experienced as a major disadvantage, again confirming the hypotheses from the analysis of the institutional characteristics of income protection in retirement. Consequently, interviewees in the UK felt they were not able to fully secure themselves against low income in retirement even when working full-time and they perceived this as unfair. Once again, the divide in the UK does not lie between atypical and standard workers, but between workers and employees. Thus, in the British context, TA workers experienced a cumulative disadvantage, both because they tended to have an irregular contribution history and because they are not legally considered employees.

To be sure, the cumulative disadvantage only applies to TA workers who are in a user firm which provides an occupational pension to its employees. In that respect, it can be argued that TA workers might share a lack of access to occupational schemes with standard workers in workplaces where no occupational scheme is made available. Similarly to what we have seen for contractual sick pay, the divide in the UK appears to depend both on the employment status and on the employers’ provisions, confirming the hypotheses from the analysis of the institutional framework of income protection in retirement. Thus, two different divides interact in the UK context, one based on the employment path, and the other based on the employer’s provision of occupational pension schemes, creating a complex picture of the insider-outsider divide in income protection in retirement. Nevertheless, as we have seen, the situation is currently changing, with the introduction of an occupational scheme provided by agencies to all TA workers, which will nonetheless improve those disadvantages in the years to come, but not for the years of employment already accumulated.

A different situation was that of the ‘precariously stable’. Given their regular contribution records, they did not perceive themselves at a disadvantage compared to standard workers, having accrued pension rights comparable to those of standard workers. For them, the divide might have emerged only if they did not have their contract renewed, but they otherwise enjoyed income protection comparable to standard workers. Overall, three different groups could be identified as regards the disadvantages experienced, the ‘precariously stable’ in Italy, the ‘precariously unstable’ in Italy and the ‘precariously unstable’ in the UK, showing that the disadvantages in income protection in retirement are shaped both by country-level institutional configurations of the pension system and by the employment path followed by atypical workers.

7.5.2 Private Pension Schemes

When it comes to private pensions, only three interviewees (one in Italy and two in the UK) were paying contributions to a private pension scheme or had any form of individual supplementary pension. This is partly due, in the Italian case, to the limited development of private pension funds and the comparatively minor importance of private pensions in the overall pension mix (Cesari et al., 2007; Mandrone e Marocco, 2012; Natali and Stamati, 2013). However, both in Italy and in the UK, it was also mostly due to the individual inability to save enough money to contribute regularly to a private pension fund. This goes back to the inability to commit financially over long periods, which is part of the income insecurity discussed in section 7.2 of this chapter.

In both countries, even those who enrolled into a private scheme tended to have quite irregular contribution histories, being able to contribute only in certain working periods as savings tended to be allocated to different purposes, which were regarded as more urgent. As Giulia explained:

I have thought of joining a supplementary pension [scheme], you know. I even went to the bank and to the insurance company. They explained everything and, of course, it was a wise idea, but I couldn't afford it...I mean, what if I lose my job? What if they don't renew my contract next year? How am I gonna be able to pay [in the fund]? So I decided to leave it.

Below is instead the experience of Catherine, who joined a private pension scheme many years ago, aware that her statutory pension would not be enough, but who was unable to keep paying contributions:

I have a private pension that is untouched because I can't contribute, so that's another thing that I can't do, you know. I don't have savings, I don't contribute, this is a frozen...this will be there when I'm 65, you know, whatever it is. I don't even know what it is, but I paid into that for years, and I don't have that now, you know.

Furthermore, in comparison to standard workers, TA workers did not or had only limited access to an important source of income in retirement, redundancy pay. As already mentioned in section 7.3.2 of this chapter, workers with long-term, permanent employment relationships generally receive their redundancy pay at the moment of retirement, when ending their long-term employment relationship. TA workers in the UK are unlikely to have accumulated any redundancy pay at the moment of retirement given that they have access to it after 2 years of continuous employment for the same agency, unless they are able to secure a permanent employment relationship for several years of their working life before retirement. By contrast, in Italy, where TA workers have access from the first day of employment, the disadvantage comes from the fact that they do not accumulate it or receive it in a lump-sum at the end of their career, but they are entitled to little amounts at the end of each assignment. By retirement, they will only have access to a limited amount when compared to standard workers, who are instead expected to have accumulated their redundancy pay for several years before retirement (Jessoula, 2012).

Although interviewees were little aware of the disadvantage they were experiencing compared to permanent workers, they acknowledged how important redundancy pay was in retirement. For instance, Mary, who had the chance to accrue a generous severance payment after more than 20 years as a permanent employee, said,

What if the temping runs out? If it dries up, I'm gonna have to start using my nest egg and we [her and her husband] didn't want me to do that. That was our money and we were trying to keep it.

So, in Mary's case, the acknowledgment that the irregularity of income in TAW would lead her to use the redundancy pay accumulated in previous years, was a serious worry. As we have seen in section 7.3.2 of this chapter, the irregularity of their employment experience led many TA workers to use at least part of the redundancy pay accumulated in previous years of employment as a source of income in times of unemployment, rather than in retirement, as is the case for workers with a long record of standard employment.

In conclusion, in both countries, the inadequate protection provided by public and/or occupational pension schemes was hardly compensated by the use of private pension schemes. In fact, notwithstanding the availability of private pensions the lack of financial resources and/or the unwillingness to financially commit in the long term, hampered the ability to access

private income protection. Although there is no formal divide between standard and TA workers, TA workers tended to be presented with a disadvantage with regard to access to private pension protection and the disadvantage appeared to be quite similar both in Italy and in the UK. Therefore, it can be argued that even if no institutional disadvantage is present, income insecurity among TA workers engenders an inability to save into private pension schemes, which can foster a disadvantage in income protection in retirement. We can talk of a spill-over from income insecurity during employment into income insecurity during retirement, as the present employment status kept workers from insuring themselves for the future.

Furthermore, redundancy pay was a source of income TA workers were partly lacking in retirement compared to standard workers. In Italy, this was due to the fact that they had their redundancy pay liquidated at the end of each assignment. By contrast, in the UK case, this was due to the fact that they were only entitled to it after 2 years of continuous employment, making it difficult for them to accumulate any by the time of retirement, unless, they could only rely on the redundancy pay accumulated when in a standard, long-term employment relationships. This meant that compared to workers who had been working in the same job for several years before retirement, as it is the case of many standard workers, these workers lacked this source of income support, further hampering income protection in retirement.

7.6 Personal Sources of Income Protection

Having analysed the disadvantages experienced by TA workers in Italy and the UK in accessing income protection schemes, it is important to investigate whether these workers could rely on other institutional arrangements to complement or substitute public and other employment-related forms of income protection. This section analyses two main forms of income support: formal credit and the family. While the former is provided through the market and it may be used to provide income separate from employment, the latter can provide informal income protection by decoupling income from individual employment conditions (Crouch, 2015). As is discussed, TA workers experienced similar disadvantages in access to formal credit in both countries as a consequence of insecure earnings and employment prospects, thus reinforcing an already existing disadvantage rather than counteracting it. By contrast, the family acts in both countries as a source of income protection, complementing or substituting public and contractual income support schemes, hence reducing income insecurity from employment. However, the importance and amount of income protection provided by the

family strongly varied between the two countries, being much higher and pervasive in Italy than in the UK.

7.6.1 Formal Credit

Formal credit plays an important role in contemporary societies both in smoothen consumption over time and in providing liquidity for investments (Crouch, 2015). Furthermore, for TA workers in particular, it might help complement or substitute income protection from public and occupational schemes, reducing the disadvantages already discussed in this chapter and, more generally, reducing income insecurity. Nevertheless, in both countries, for most interviewees, access to formal credit was severely hampered by their employment status.

Firstly, both in Italy and in the UK, as already discussed in section 7.2 of this chapter, the lack of employment stability was a significant obstacle to getting a loan or a mortgage, or to getting a credit card. *'I still can't get that, cause when you're temping you don't get a mortgage [...]* *I know when you're temping it is very, very hard to secure a mortgage'* (Mary). *'That was yet another thing I cannot do, getting a loan, because you simply can't!'* (Giulia). This was perceived as a serious disadvantage, in that accessing formal credit would have facilitated consumption over time and helped make investments that were otherwise unaffordable (e.g. purchasing a car, buying a house), helping decouple income from employment earnings (Crouch, 2015). When the interviewees were able to secure a loan or a mortgage it was generally through the help of their partner or their parents who acted as guarantors or, more often, who were directly responsible for the payments. As Chiara stated:

I had to wait a long time before being able to buy a car, because I didn't have references and the temporary contract counts for nothing! I had to call my mum and she acted as a guarantor and with the generous payslips of December and January, I got the loan.

Therefore, they generally needed the help of someone with a secure source of income or with enough savings because they were not regarded by formal financial institutions as a reliable debtor, given their temporary employment contract. Individually, they were likely to be refused any form of credit and they sometimes did not even try to ask a bank as they already knew their request would have been rejected. *'I didn't even try, I knew I couldn't get a loan for the car'* (Bryan). *'We didn't have problems with credit simply because we didn't dare ask for it!'* (Alessandro). Nevertheless, in four cases (two in each country), where workers had been regularly employed for several months, and with a large amount of savings deposited in the bank, they were able to secure a loan without any external help, thanks to their reliable credit history and regular earnings. However, the amount received was generally small and

interest rates on the funding were higher than they would have been for a person with a stable income. As Mary complained:

You need to have collateral and you're looking, like a large proportion of your savings would have to go on the mortgage, because when you're temping, you're not classed as reliable, therefore you get the higher end specs of high interests and what you're classed as an unreliable source of funding [...] So I think temping staff have a really bad deal with the banks for that, like. I mean, they could have a fantastic credit history, but because they're in temporary employment, they're not classed as reliable for mortgages. So, it's difficult!

Therefore, a standard job was seen not only as a form of income security *per se*, but also as a way to have access to formal credit individually, or at a more reasonable cost. Thus, a standard job was perceived by most interviewees as a gateway to a range of financial services that they were otherwise precluded from, and which were considered 'normal' in their society.

Even in the few cases where they would have been able to secure a loan or a mortgage, with the help of a family member and thanks to savings, interviewees did want to commit to long-term financial investments, as they were not sure they would have had enough income to pay the fees in the future, thus preventing them from making long-term financial plans. '*We [her and her husband] do need both for the mortgage. We've asked and we did get one, but we wouldn't get as good a deal. Also we wouldn't feel as comfortable that we could make all the repayments*' (Claire). '*I don't want a loan, I don't want other preoccupations, I don't want things I have to pay back in the future*' (Chiara). Thus, even when the interviewees did not experience a formal barrier to accessing formal credit, income insecurity prevented them from incurring debt that they were not sure they could repay. Once again, we can see how uncertainty about income prospects makes the interviewees unwilling to engage in any form of long-term financial commitment.

Overall, TA workers in both countries experienced similar disadvantages with respect to access to formal credit. Most of them were unable to access formal credit individually, as in most cases they needed to have another member of the family act as a guarantor or be directly responsible for payments. Moreover, even when they managed to secure credit, the amount of money received was more limited and the cost of the credit (i.e. interest rate and collateral) were more burdensome than they would have been had they been in permanent employment. No systematic difference could be found either between countries or between the 'precariously unstable' and the 'precariously stable' group, given that both were regarded as unreliable for the credit system. It can be said that the insecure income from employment spilled over into a disadvantage in securing income protection through formal credit, reinforcing income insecurity. Therefore, we can argue that their employment status produced a cumulative

disadvantage, providing more limited income security from employment and preventing workers from accessing alternative sources of income protection from the market.

Furthermore, their income insecurity prevented them from applying for formal credit as they were themselves unwilling to commit financially over long periods of time, given the unpredictability of their income sources in the long run. As we have previously seen when discussing private pensions, even if no formal institutional divide was present, income insecurity constituted a barrier to long-term financial commitments, further constraining income prospects. In that respect, it can be said that an experienced divide in income from employment translated into a lower ability to secure income separate from employment.

The divide in access to formal credit has been mostly ignored in the dualism literature, given that dualist scholars have predominantly focused on employment-related sources of income protection. Nevertheless, this lack of research cannot be justified in the light of these findings, which show the importance formal credit is perceived to have in providing income outside employment. Access to formal credit (or the lack thereof) has received more attention in the precariousness literature (see, for instance, Pedaci, 2007; Morelli et al., 2012), who have highlighted the difficulties atypical workers experience in applying for credit. However, more research is needed to investigate the relation between atypical employment and access to formal credit, in order to better assess the degree of exclusion atypical workers experience and to gauge the exact financial disadvantage these workers have (in terms of collateral and interest rate) if they are granted credit, as well as the conditions under which this is moderated.

7.6.2 The Family

The role of the family in providing income protection was different in the two countries. More precisely, while the income protection from the partner (where present) was similar in the two cases, income support from the parents was experienced in different ways in the two countries. This had enormous consequences for the ability to secure individual income protection, both when employed and when unemployed. While, in Italy, the family, specifically the parents, was perceived as a primary and continuous source of income, the family's income protection role in the UK was more limited, and generally only present in situations of extreme necessity. This meant a different ability of TA workers in the two countries to secure income protection through private means, which had an impact on their degree of feeling like 'outsiders' as regards to income protection.

Income support from the partner was experienced similarly in the two countries. The partner, where present, was regarded as a significant source of income protection both in Italy and in the UK. The partner's income or his/her savings were generally regarded as part of the available resources both for short-term and long-term expenses. The partner's income was considered relevant for any financial planning and were part of the pooled resources for everyday living. Furthermore, the partner could help in situations where the individual income was not enough to live on. *'He did help a lot, cause I could pay the bills but nothing more'* (Claire). *'It was my partner, given that he has a permanent contract, although he is only part-time, that made us have the funding'* (Francesca). The relevance of the partner's income to achieve income security had already been underlined by several scholars studying in-work poverty (e.g. Allègre, 2008; Fraser et al., 2011), who highlighted the importance of the pooling of resources within the household to secure income for family members with unstable employment. However, the partner, unlike the parents, was not always a stable support, as people might divorce or the relationship might end. Susanne, for instance, had to quit the training she was undertaking and was obliged to go back to temping because of the break-up of a relationship:

I needed some money. [...] Without going into a huge amount of detail, I'd split up with my boyfriend, so I was kind of... financially I had to then deal with it on my own, so I thought, right, OK, better do something.

By contrast, when it comes to the income support from other family members, the situation presented striking differences between the two countries. In Italy, income protection from the family allowed those workers to at least partly counterbalance limited access to public or market-based forms of income protection. Specifically, as we will see in more detail in the following paragraphs, it was mainly the parents and/or the partner's parents who were the main source of financial protection for those workers. No systematic difference in reliance on the family could be found between the 'precariously unstable' and the 'precariously stable' group, despite their partly different experience of income insecurity. As already highlighted in the precariousness literature (see for instance, Fullin, 2004; Bertolini, 2009; Altieri, 2009), atypical workers in Italy strongly rely on the family to achieve a decent standard of living. The family plays the role of a safety net of first resort, providing the financial resources workers need before they try to access them elsewhere, either through the market or through public providers. The analysis confirmed these expectations from the literature, as the interviewees' experience fit well in the familistic model already described by several authors who analysed Southern European welfare models (see, for instance, Ferrera, 1996; Martin, 1996; Naldini and Guerrero Jurado, 2009).

Firstly, the family, particularly the parents, qualified as a safety net on which TA workers relied in case of financial distress or to ask for financial help for one-off expenses or long-term investments. More precisely, financial protection from the family was considered highly important during spells of unemployment. As Giada explained, *'Now that I lost my job [...] my parents are helping me financially, I don't know how I would do otherwise'* or Alessandro, *'Of course my parents help me! Thank God, I have them!'*. The financial responsibility the parents feel towards their children was thought of as natural, and the interviewees felt they had to justify in case they were not able to receive financial help from the family. For instance, Giulia said:

No my mum didn't help me. It was not her fault! She simply couldn't. She has just her pension, not a very generous one. But she helped me in the past [...] No I really couldn't ask her [for money].

Therefore, aside from the objective lack of financial means, there seemed to be an idea of financial obligation from the parents to the children which is culturally bound, confirming what has already been stated in the literature on the Southern European welfare model (e.g. Guerrero Jurado and Naldini, 1996; Naldini and Guerrero Jurado, 2009). In cases where the main source of financial protection was not the parents, it was the partner's partners that stepped in, when the person was married or was cohabiting, again emphasising a social norm of obligation between older and newer generations.

Aside from situations of financial distress, the family in Italy played an important protection role by providing housing, as already underlined by Tosi and Cremaschi (2001) and Iacovou (2010). Although the large majority of interviewees did not live with the parents, three still lived in the same household as their parents, mostly those in their early thirties, but not exclusively. Even though this housing arrangement was not necessarily related to a lack of income or inability to pay for independent accommodation, two interviewees cited those as important reasons while they lived with their parents. *'I have lost my job [...] I used to live alone but I couldn't afford it anymore'* (Michele). Nevertheless, the role of the parents in providing housing was mostly experienced in the provision of financial means to buy a house, rather than in direct housing. All the interviewees who owned a house were able to buy one thanks to the financial help of the parents (or, again, the partner's parents). Five were living in a house the parents had previously owned or lived in a house that was bought by the parents with the purpose of giving it to their children, while in four other cases the parents were paying the mortgage either entirely or partly. *'[The bank] would have never given me a mortgage, so my parents and my husband's parents made a big effort and bought us a house'* (Francesca). Nonetheless, none were living in a rented house where the parents helped in paying the rent.

This confirms a more general attitude among Italian families, already highlighted by Tosi and Cremaschi (2001), which sees buying a house as a long-term investment, but sees rental simply as an irrecoverable cost, thus not worth financing.

However, the parents' role in income protection was not restricted to housing. Other non-ordinary expenses were paid for or partly financed by the parents. Financial support was generally provided for long-term goods, such as a car, or a fridge, which, on the one hand, were seen as investments and, on the other hand, were one-off payments, not requiring regular contributions from the parents and perceived as a form of a gift. As we have seen specifically when dealing with access to formal credit (see previous section), even when interviewees were economically able to fund a loan or a mortgage to buy long-term goods or a house, formal financial credit was severely restricted given the lack of collateral or the unstable income position. In those situations, the parents or the partner's parents might act as a guarantor, allowing the person to access formal credit, thus facilitating access to market-provided financial resources.

Finally, in four cases, the parents provided regular funding to supplement the salary. This happened in situations where the worker's income or the worker's and the partner's income were not enough to cover even regular expenses. In this case, the family was extremely important in preventing the person from falling into in-work poverty. *'For the household budget, they contribute around 25-30%, but only for regular expenses, not for superfluous ones!'* (Fabio, 44). *'Thank god my parents helped at the time [when a TA worker], I don't know how I would have survived otherwise!'* (Michele). Finally, the income protection provided by the parents through services was important, as it did not necessitate relying on the market or on public institutions, thus allowing for indirect savings. *'They helped me a lot, even for stupid things, such as moving house, or giving lifts to work. They helped me in anything that could make me save money'* (Alessandro). The role of the family was considered important also, for instance, in the case of childcare, as previously highlighted by Murgia and Poggio (2011), studying precariousness. As Chiara, who had to move to another city in order to find a job, says, *'Fortunately my mum could take care of the kids [...] They go having lunch at my mum's, she buys them little things they need'*.

By contrast, in the UK, the parents did not provide an ongoing income protection throughout life as was the case for some Italian interviewees. None of the interviewees mentioned their parents as a significant support for long-term investment, such as housing, though the vast majority of interviewees were renting a place, rather than owning one. The family was rarely mentioned as a guarantor for securing formal credit or accessing other market-based financial

support. Nevertheless, the parents may have provided housing in case the interviewee was temporarily unable to pay a rent, by letting the individual stay at their place. As in the case of Claire, *'That was for 3 or 4 months because I needed to have enough of an income and have enough employment – cause getting a flat in London's horrible'*. Housing and direct financial support were the most common forms of support the parents provided (or would be able to provide).

However, these forms of income protection were considered a support of last resort, once other income sources were not enough or had run out. The majority of interviewees in the UK felt they had to be about to run out of savings before asking for financial help from the family and not have any other source of available income. *'I would only ask them after finishing all my savings and my partner's, only if I really couldn't find any job, any!'* (Bryan). *'Before asking my parents I'd go for my savings and then I'd just... I would be a cleaner, I'd... take any job'* (Claire). Thus, income support from the family was asked only after the materialisation of a financial need, unlike what we have seen in the Italian case. The only form of support which could be equated to the Italian case was in providing services which would have been otherwise had to be purchased through the market, such as transport or childcare.

Overall, the parents in the UK context were perceived as a safety net of last resort, a form of income support in case of extreme necessity, when all other options were exhausted. As Susanne explained her situation when she was made redundant:

I could have gone back home, so if the worst had come to the worst, you know, I could have definitely. I would be OK somehow. I mean obviously you don't want to be going doing that; but as a last resort [...] I wouldn't [ask my parents], yeah, I wouldn't want to. I wouldn't want to. If I had to then I would, definitely, but I just, yeah, I just wouldn't want to.

Thus, rather than a preventive safety net against poverty, as in the Italian case, where on-going income support was available and frequent transfers of resources were provided, support from parents in the UK was conceived of only once the risk of poverty had already materialised. It can be argued that this reflects the characteristics of the Liberal welfare regime to which the UK is said to belong (Esping-Andersen, 1990; Taylor-Gooby and Larsen, 2004), which places comparatively little emphasis on the family as a source of income protection.

Overall, the role of the partner was quite similar in both countries. The current partner was seen as an important form of protection, enabling the pooling and sharing of resources within the household. By contrast, the family, that is the parents (or the partner's parents), tended to play an extremely important role in the Italian case, providing a form of first resort safety net, on which the workers could comfortably rely in case of necessity, or even before the

materialisation of a need. The importance of family solidarity in the Italian context meant that the disadvantages experienced in income protection through public benefits or the market could be partly compensated for by family-provided income support, as long as the family had the financial resources to do so. In the UK, by contrast, the importance of the parents in providing income protection was much more limited. More importantly, the family was not considered a safety net of first resort or a continuous source of protection over the individual's life. The interviewees turned or thought of turning to the parents only once they had exhausted all or most other forms of private income protection (such as job earnings and savings) and only when in dire need. The parents appeared to act as a safety net of last resort, but help from the family was not always taken for granted or considered a certainty. These findings confirm the hypotheses from the analytical framework, which claimed the family to play a more important role in Italy compared to the UK, as it is characterised by a familialistic welfare regime, in line with the comparative welfare regime literature (Ferrera, 1996; Rhodes, 1996; Moreno, 2006).

To conclude, family support in both countries appeared to partly compensate for the limited income protection provided by employment, the welfare state and the market. However, this role was much more prominent in the Italian context than in the British one; in Italy, the family acted even to 'prevent' needs from going unsatisfied, *de facto* limiting the perception of being an 'outsider' from arising. Even in cases where the support from the family was given after other forms of income support were attempted, the family acted to complement or substitute, as much as financially possible, income protection from other sources, as already highlighted by other authors (e.g. Fullin, 2004). By contrast, in the British case, income protection from the family was not considered either natural or normal, and it was mostly provided in situations of severe financial distress. In that respect, it did not act to prevent exclusion but rather as a relief to it. Thus, it can be argued that the TA workers in Italy had access to a more effective source of income protection which could counteract disadvantages experienced in other aspects of income protection and they were better able to reduce the divide with standard workers, compared to their British counterparts. Nonetheless, this source of protection was dependent on the financial resources available to the family, contributing to producing intergenerational inequalities.

7.7 Conclusion

Income insecurity due to the employment status engendered multiple disadvantages. The experience of the 'precariously unstable' appeared to be similar in the two countries, while

‘precariously stable’ had a different experience. Thus, rather than a distinction between countries as we might have expected, the analysis revealed the distinction between two groups with different employment paths. These findings partly contradict a rigid categorisation of dualistic outcomes based on country-level institutional arrangements, which has been dominant in the dualism literature on social protection (e.g. Emmenegger et al., 2012). The individual employment path which, as we have seen in chapter 5, is influenced by several not necessarily institutional factors, appears to be the main determinant of the type of income insecurity experienced by TA workers, regardless of the characteristics of the social protection system.

Nonetheless, as expected, the characteristics of the institutional setting played an important role in shaping the disadvantages TA workers experienced in both countries. However, compared to the institutional disadvantages identified in the literature, the analysis of the individual experience revealed a more complex picture. On the one hand, while some institutional divides were clearly reflected in the interviewees’ perceptions, others were not or only partly so. For instance, the perceived fairness and ‘deservingness’ related to contribution-based UBs was at odds with the initial hypotheses, while the hypothesised limited divide expected for UBs in the UK was disconfirmed in the analysis, given that the characteristics of the UB system appeared to have contributed to creating a different perceived divide, that between benefit claimants and non-claimants. It can be said that in those cases, the institutional characteristics of the income protection system interacted with social norms in redefining the income protection divide along lines different from the purely institutional ones, in which, nonetheless, the institutional characteristics still play an important role. On the other hand, minor institutional disadvantages were sometimes perceived as important sources of division. For instance, the fact that SSP was only available after 3 days of sickness was experienced as a significant disadvantage. This suggests that comparative dualism studies which mostly focus on macro-characteristics of social protection systems, which undoubtedly facilitate cross-country comparison (e.g. Palier and Thelen, 2010; Emmenegger et al., 2012), are at risk of oversimplifying current institutional divides in contemporary labour markets, as micro-features of the social protection system can play an equally important role in fostering an insider-outsider divide in income protection.

The analysis also revealed how in the UK, rather than simply talking about a smaller divide between atypical and standard workers (Emmenegger et al., 2012) or a divide based on access to occupational schemes (Seleeb-Kaiser et al., 2011), different interacting divides are present, depending on the employment status, employers’ provisions and tenure. Firstly, it is the fact

that TA workers are legally considered workers but not employees that creates a divide in access to occupational income protection, rather than the fact that they are non-standard *per se*. In fact, other atypical workers, such as fixed-term employees, do have access to those schemes and can be argued not to experience any divide with standard workers. Furthermore, access to contractual sick pay and occupational pensions showed how some employers have expanded access also to TA workers while others do not provide any to either TA or standard workers. Similarly, when discussing redundancy pay, we have seen that the divide is based on tenure rather than on the employment status, but this disproportionally affects workers with temporary jobs. The picture which emerges is not ‘dualistic’, but it rather shows the existence of different pockets of inequality in income protection in an overall patchy system of income protection.

Moreover, the analysis of the individual experience also revealed that even when certain forms of income protection were formally available, their insecure income status made the TA workers in both countries unwilling to enter the long-term financial commitments required to provide income protection. This was the case, for example, of enrolment into private pension schemes or access to formal credit. This meant that even when institutional barriers to income protection were not present, the income insecurity engendered by their employment status led to an income protection divide. Thus, it can be argued that the investigation of institutional divides cannot reveal the overall insider-outsider picture, as institutional divides in one sub-dimension may spill over into another sub-dimension in which an institutional divide is not present, creating a more complex picture of disadvantages than we would expect by analysing institutional divides alone.

Finally, access to personal sources of income protection, such as formal credit and the family, showed the importance of these sources in shaping an insider-outsider divide. While similar disadvantages were experienced in the two countries in accessing formal credit, the family provided a different way of limiting the income protection divide with standard workers, in certain cases in Italy even eliminating it altogether. Authors in the dualism literature have focused mostly on employment-related sources of income protection, *de facto* ignoring other sources of income protection. This proves an important oversight given that these two sources of protection were experienced as significant in the overall experience of income protection of the interviewees. As already highlighted by several scholars in the precariousness literature (see, for instance, Fullin, 2004, Bertolini, 2009), it is the overall income protection the worker has access to which determines her relative degree of inclusion into society, and many factors

come into play in shaping this situation. These findings call for more attention to be paid to personal forms of income protection in gauging the overall insider-outsider divide.

8. Conclusions

8.1 Disadvantages in Atypical Employment

The spread of atypical employment has been one of the most significant changes in European labour markets in the past few decades (Esping-Andersen and Regini, 2001; Castel, 2002). Atypical employment has generally been argued to be of lower quality compared to standard employment, and atypical workers have been said to experience a number of disadvantages compared to their standard counterparts (Kenworthy, 2008; Rubery, 2006). In this context, the institutional setting has been presented as a dominant factor in shaping those disadvantages, fostering different divides standard and atypical workers in a number of employment-related dimensions (Davidsson and Naczyk, 2009; Emmenegger et al., 2012). As discussed in this thesis, two main streams of literature have investigated the disadvantages of atypical workers: the dualism literature and the precariousness literature. As I have argued, although both streams consider institutions important factors in shaping the disadvantages experienced by atypical workers, they differ in the perspective used.

Scholars in the dualism literature adopt a strongly formalistic approach, conceptualising disadvantages in terms of rights and entitlements afforded by the institutional configurations of the labour market, the welfare system and the industrial relations system. Their area of interest is focused on institutional arrangements, and individual disadvantages are thought to be determined by the divides between standard and atypical employment produced by the institutional and regulatory system. By contrast, precariousness scholars start by identifying disadvantages at the individual level and from there consider a wider range of factors producing them. Thus, institutional factors are analysed in interaction with individual characteristics and with the broader socio-economic system in shaping the disadvantages. As a result, rather than expecting dualistic outcomes, this scholarship allows for diversity of disadvantages among atypical workers both between countries and within the same institutional setting. In chapter 2, I argued that in order to explore the role institutions play in shaping disadvantages among atypical workers, it is useful to draw from both streams of literature. While insights from the dualism literature help identify the main institutional divides between standard and atypical workers, insights from the precariousness literature are better able to shed light on their impact at the individual level.

As explained in chapter 3, the investigation of the impact of different institutional arrangements on individual disadvantages required a comparative research design. Hence, two countries with different institutional settings with respect to their labour market, industrial

relations and social protection system have been chosen for the analysis. Italy and the UK feature contrasting employment regulations and industrial relations systems and are characterised by different welfare systems. These differences have been accentuated by the contrasting paths towards labour market liberalisation adopted by the two countries.

The aim of the thesis was both empirical and theoretical. Empirically, it sought to provide an analysis of disadvantages experienced by one category of atypical workers in comparative perspective. As argued in chapter 3, there is currently a lack of qualitative comparative studies on the analysis of experienced disadvantages among atypical workers. Theoretically, the dissertation aimed to shed light on the connection between individual disadvantages and institutional divides, analysing how different institutional settings affect atypical workers' disadvantages. Hence, on the one hand, this thesis has contributed to the dualism literature, by illustrating whether and how institutional divides translate into individual disadvantages. On the other hand, it has contributed to the precariousness literature, by explaining how some individual disadvantages can be attributed to specific institutional settings.

8.2 Comparing TA Workers' Disadvantages

The number of institutions affecting atypical workers' experience argues for a multi-dimensional analysis of disadvantage. Following the main institutional divides identified in the dualism literature (e.g. Davidsson and Naczyk, 2009) my analysis was structured along three core dimensions of experience: employment, work and income protection. For each dimension, different aspects of individual experience were investigated, with the purpose of having a rounded portrait of TA workers' experience and the disadvantages they face. For each dimension, hypotheses about the role institutions play in shaping the disadvantages were derived chiefly from the dualism literature, but these were complemented with insights from the precariousness literature and, where relevant, from other streams of literature.

At a very general level, this thesis has only partly confirmed expectations from the dualism literature, presenting a more complex picture of the divides between TA and standard workers in Italy and the UK, while providing a detailed account of the similarities and differences in the disadvantages experienced by TA workers in comparative perspective.

8.2.1 Comparing Disadvantages in the Employment Experience

As regards employment, the picture offered by the dualism literature in the comparison between Liberal and Southern European countries is one of divides between atypical and standard workers that tend, both dynamically and statically, to be more pronounced in Southern Europe mainly because of a larger gap in employment protection between atypical and standard employment. Thus, at the individual level, hypotheses grounded in this literature expect TA workers to feel more insecure and to feel more ‘trapped’ in atypical employment in Italy compared to the UK.

As shown in chapter 5, my analysis has partly confirmed these expectations, but also revealed a more nuanced picture. On the one hand, TA workers in Italy have been found to see the opportunities to become standard continuously delayed, in some cases for several years. TA workers in Italy can be argued to feel overall more trapped in atypical employment than those in the UK. On the other hand, another group of workers was shown to experience difficulties in reaching standard employment, and these workers were present in both countries. Thus, a similar experience of TAW as a ‘trap’ can be found in both Italy and the UK, irrespective of the employment regulation frameworks. Moreover, the analysis revealed that the two groups, although both ‘trapped’ in atypical employment, had extremely different employment experiences, with partly different disadvantages. I have suggested that these workers experienced quite different types of ‘precariousness’. More specifically, those who could be regarded to be the most insecure and whose employment experience was most different from standard workers’ experience, were those in the second group, which was present in both countries. This contrasts with the hypothesis and commonly made argument that atypical workers are necessarily more insecure in Italy than in the UK, and questions the idea that a thorough deregulation of the labour market is better for precariousness outcomes.

8.2.2 Comparing Disadvantages in the Work Experience

Although equal treatment is formally guaranteed by national legislation in both Italy and the UK, scholars from the precariousness literature have argued that atypical workers might still experience disadvantages in a number of working conditions as some derogations from the principle are in place (Vosko, 2009; Wynn, 2014). In particular, the analysis of the institutional characteristics showed that, in the UK, for some working conditions, including pay and working time, equal treatment does not apply for the first few weeks. Furthermore, a number of scholars within the precariousness literature have highlighted the lower individual

bargaining power atypical workers have (Markova and McKay, 2010; Pedaci, 2010), making it more difficult for them to bargain for better conditions and to voice complaints in cases of improper behaviour by employers. Hence, some disadvantages were expected to be found in the work experience in both countries, and TA workers to experience a larger divide in the UK, because of the derogations from the principle of equal treatment in the first few weeks of employment.

As I discussed at length in chapter 6, the expectations from the precariousness literature were broadly confirmed, as the analysis highlighted numerous disadvantages experienced by TA workers, and no systematic differences between the two countries. The analysis revealed that even when no formal institutional divide was present, as equal treatment was formally guaranteed by law, practices in the workplace lead to a divide between TA and standard workers. Thus, considering only formal institutional divides does not allow us to grasp the actual disadvantages experienced by workers, as formal equality is not always applied in practice. Moreover, the analysis has provided important insights as to the reasons why TA workers are not willing to counteract those practices or why, more generally, they were unable to negotiate better employment and working conditions. The concept of *ricattabilità* proved useful in characterising the weaker bargaining position which TA workers have and which is associated to the risk of not having their assignment renewed or of not being called in the future by either the hirer or the agency. This weaker position constituted an important disadvantage relative to standard workers, which could not be easily attributed to the institutional framework.

With respect to collective representation, scholars in the dualism literature have long argued that unions tend to privilege the interest of standard workers (Lindbeck and Snower, 2001; Rueda, 2005). I thus expected TA workers in Italy to experience a higher collective representation divide than TA workers in the UK, given the higher union power in the former case. Nevertheless, according to the so-called revitalisation literature unions have in some instances adopted more inclusive strategies towards atypical workers (Heery, 2004; Gumbrell-McCormick, 2011; Benassi and Dorigatti, 2015), although their inclusivity might still be selective (Cervino, 2000; Durazzi, 2015). Thus, the alternative hypothesis was formulated that atypical workers would feel more represented in Italy partly due to a greater union strength, although unions might have adopted only a partially inclusive strategy.

The findings can be said to partly confirm both hypotheses. Specifically, the interviews showed that, in both countries, unions were perceived to mainly represent standard workers. Though in Italy there were some benefits in the existence of unions specifically representing

atypical workers, these were not enough to compensate for the gap in representation compared to standard workers in workplace negotiations. Thus, workers experienced similar disadvantages in collective representation in the two countries, despite their very different industrial relations systems.

8.2.3 Comparing Disadvantages in the Income Protection Experience

Theories of dualism posit that countries which rely on mostly contribution-based benefits, such as Italy, have a larger divide in access to income protection, compared to countries which predominantly rely on means-tested benefits, such as the UK, as atypical workers tend to find it more difficult to accrue sufficient contributions and may have to only rely on second-tier means-tested schemes (Palier and Martin, 2007; Palier and Thelen, 2012; Emmenegger et al., 2012), which in Italy are fragmented and not generous (Madama, 2010; Sacchi, 2011). However, others have argued that once we consider the importance of occupational schemes, atypical workers in the UK and other Liberal welfare states might experience an even larger divide (Seeleib-Kaiser, 2012). Following the analysis of the institutional characteristics of the social protection system in Italy and the UK, I refined these hypotheses. Specifically, I expected TA workers in the UK to face a more significant disadvantage in sickness and retirement, given the potential importance of occupational schemes in these two fields, but a smaller disadvantage in unemployment, given the predominance of means-tested benefits.

My empirical analysis has only partly confirmed these hypotheses, in fact revealing complex interactions between institutional and other factors in shaping disadvantages in income protection. Firstly, rather than being distinguished along country lines, the experience of income insecurity could be categorised depending on the employment path of the worker, which is only partly affected by a country-level employment regulations. With respect to the experience of income protection, the analysis showed that in accordance with the literature, the minor role played by means-tested benefits in the overall Italian social protection system appeared to engender important disadvantages. However, in contrast to the dominant literature, the analysis revealed a more differentiated picture of the different divides shaped by contribution-based and means-tested benefits, showing means-tested could be equally, if not more, dualising. Moreover, for the UK, it showed that a ‘dualistic’ representation of the income protection divide is far too simplistic, as several divides interact at the same time, based on the employment status, tenure and employers’ provision of occupational schemes.

8.3 Further Considerations: Evaluating Divides between Atypical and Standard Employment

This thesis has provided an overview of the disadvantages experienced by TA workers compared to standard workers in Italy and the UK. This brings us back to general debates about the existence of an insider-outside divide in contemporary labour markets (Lindbeck and Snower, 2001), of labour market dualism (Emmenegger et al., 2012) and an overall polarisation of the labour force (Kalleberg, 2013). We might include in these debates also positions about the emergence of a new social class of precarious workers (Standing, 2011) or an overall increase in insecurity among contemporary workers (Beck, 1992), but also the controversial argument that insecurity in contemporary labour markets is a media and political construction with little empirical evidence (Fevre, 2007). In drawing at the contribution of this thesis to these overall debates, I would first like to consider what this thesis has to offer on the conceptualisation of employment-related divides.

First of all, this thesis has shown that considering ‘divides’ only as institutional, as done by most scholars in the dualism literature, can only reveal part of the overall story. I have shown that divides cannot be regarded only as institutionally determined and institutions have to be regarded as part of a different range of factors influencing the disadvantages atypical workers experience. In that respect, findings from my analysis are in accordance with the position of many scholars in the precariousness literature who have considered the importance of individual and contextual characteristics in shaping the disadvantages experienced by atypical workers (e.g. Tucker, 2003; Nienhüser, 2005). We have seen that individual factors, such as the support of family members or the individual ability to rely on other sources of income, had a strong impact on the experience of disadvantage and on the perception of a divide with standard workers. At the same time, contextual factors, such as the prevalent political and media discourses on benefit claiming, had also an important impact on the perception of ‘inclusivity’ of benefits. Furthermore, divides based on the employment status might exist even when no formal institutional divide is present. For instance, the analysis of work experience has revealed that the intrinsic characteristics of TAW and discriminatory practices in the workplaces led to a divide between TA and standard workers even where equality is formally guaranteed by the institutional framework.

Secondly, the analysis has revealed how an institutional disadvantage might be differently perceived by workers at the individual level. Specifically, while some were perceived as fair and legitimate, others were regarded as unfair forms of discrimination or abuse. Although the thesis did not explore in depth the reasons for why this was the case, it has shown how

institutionally ‘similar’ divides can translate into very different individual perceptions. This further highlights the limitation of considering disadvantages from a purely institutional perspective. A summary table of how institutional disadvantages are subjectively perceived is shown below.

Table 9. Institutionally-driven disadvantages and subjective perceptions (not divided by country)

Institutionally-driven disadvantage	Perception*
Unemployment-employment cycle	Fair/legitimate
Trap in temporary employment	Unfair
Delay in equal basic pay	Fair/legitimate
Inequality in other elements of pay	Unfair
Delay in equal working time	Fair/legitimate
No access to contribution-based UB	Fair/legitimate
No redundancy pay	Fair/legitimate
No contractual sick pay	Unfair
Irregular pension contributions	Fair/legitimate
No occupational pension	Unfair
Difficult access to formal credit	Fair/legitimate

Own elaboration. *The perception reported is that of the majority of interviewees who experienced a specific disadvantage

Moreover, this thesis has shown that, at times, distinguishing between different employment or welfare regimes (e.g. Liberal and Mediterranean) to track dualist outcomes is overly simplistic. Specific country-level institutional characteristics proved to be as important as macro-features of the institutional system in fostering a divide between TA and standard workers. For example, the fact that in the UK TA workers have an ill-defined employment status, being considered self-employed in some respects but employees in others, is a specific feature of the British labour law which has produced significant divides with standard workers. Similarly, the timing structure of statutory sickness benefits in the UK has produced a large divide with standard workers when it comes to the first three days of sickness, where TA workers are not covered. Thus, the analysis has highlighted the importance of considering quite fine-grained institutional features of a country’s institutions and policies in assessing the insider-outsider divide, instead of relying predominantly on its macro-level characteristics.

Lastly, the empirical analysis has highlighted that institutional divides are not ‘watertight’ but instead spill over into different aspects of experience, in some cases creating cumulative disadvantage. For instance, we saw how the temporary employment status does not only affect employment insecurity, but equally the ability of workers to voice complaints at the workplace or to join collective representation, also fostering a divide in working conditions. Similarly, uncertain income prospects do not only influence income insecurity but also spill over into disadvantages in funding union membership, further reducing possibilities for collective representation. In line with insights from the precariousness literature, my analysis calls for more attention to be paid to interactions between different disadvantages and the possible cumulative effects these might produce.

Nevertheless, in contrast to both the precariousness and the dualism literatures, it has shown the importance of considering both absolute and relative disadvantages. Interactions between the two are in fact relevant in shaping individual experiences as they both contribute to shaping current divides in the labour market. For example, although stigmatisation in accessing unemployment benefits in the UK affects all workers, it disproportionately affects those who experience frequent spells of unemployment, such as TA workers trapped in an employment-unemployment cycle. Similarly, a lack of suitable active labour market policies, although in principle having an impact on all workers, disproportionately affects those ‘precariously unstable’, who find themselves frequently searching for jobs.

Overall, in relation to the academic debate on contemporary divides in labour markets, this thesis has confirmed many of the disadvantages identified in both the dualism and the precariousness literatures, although with the caveats mentioned above. Nevertheless, the thesis has shown that a ‘dualistic’ theorisation of employment-related divides is overly simplistic. I have here illustrated many instances in which not all atypical workers can be argued to experience the same disadvantages. In the Italian case, workers clearly favoured TAW compared with other atypical contracts, as it guarantees equal treatment in several working conditions. In that respect, TAW could be argued to present a smaller divide with respect to standard employment compared to other atypical contracts (i.e. the cooperative contract and the co.co.pro.). In a similar way, in the UK, the ill-defined employment status of TA workers does not apply to other categories of atypical workers, such as, among others, directly-employed fixed-term workers, who can be said to enjoy a smaller divide with standard workers.

These situations have highlighted that certain forms of atypical employment might be regarded as more similar to standard employment than they are to other forms of atypical employment,

questioning the idea of a clear-cut insider-outsider divide between standard and atypical workers, as already highlighted, for instance, by Hipp et al. (2015). Furthermore, my empirical analysis has shown that in the UK, multiple intersecting divides are present, and that, in some cases, a TA worker might be regarded as an 'insider' while a standard worker might not. This shows that, in the British context, even standard workers should not be regarded as all the same, and that disadvantages are clearly not simply 'dualistic' in structure, a conclusion partly in line with what has already argued by Yoon and Chung (2016).

In relation to the precariousness literature, this thesis has identified two different kinds of precariousness experienced by TA workers, which cut across all dimensions of analysis: that of the 'precariously unstable' and that of the 'precariously stable'. Only the latter could be related to the characteristics of the employment regulation framework in Italy and could thus be associated with a specific institutional framework. Thus, simply talking about 'precariousness' when discussing atypical employment risks overlooking important differences within the 'precarious' experiences of atypical workers, both between and within countries. The thesis thus calls for more attention to be paid to the variety of experiences which might be labelled under the concept of precariousness and how these can be related to the different configurations of institutions in place.

8.4 Limitations and Future Research

One of the main purposes of this thesis has been exploratory, given the current lack of comparative qualitative studies on the disadvantages experienced by atypical workers. Nevertheless, as any exploratory study, it can only provide an initial overview of the issues atypical workers experience and how these are structured by the institutional setting. Further research is needed in order to complement, broaden and also challenge the findings presented in this thesis.

Firstly, the thesis has partly questioned the dichotomy between standard and atypical employment which has been one of the mainstays of the dualism literature. It has shown that, on the one hand, other variables might interact with the employment status in producing a variety of divides both among atypical workers and between atypical and standard workers. On the other hand, it has shown how specific characteristics of TAW in each country might lead to a divide with standard employment, rather than the fact that it is non-standard *per se*. Future research may be carried out to investigate disadvantages experienced by workers in other forms of atypical employment in Italy and in the UK. Although, as already mentioned in

chapter 3, some scholars within the precariousness literature have partly done so in the Italian context (see, for instance, Fullin, 2004), there has not been a systematic analysis of how specific institutional arrangements affect workers with different atypical employment statuses. A more systematic analysis might enable an assessment of the differences in employment, work and income protection disadvantages across different atypical contracts. At the same time, future research could look beyond the employment status as the main variable of analysis, as my analysis revealed how some of the factors shaping divides were not necessarily related to the employment status. For instance, in the UK context, employers' provisions and tenure proved relevant in shaping labour market divides.

Secondly, future research can also be carried out to investigate disadvantages among TA workers in countries with different institutional settings. The UK and Italy were chosen as representative of two groups of countries, the Liberal and the Mediterranean respectively, which present very different institutional characteristics in a number of employment-related dimensions, including employment, work and income protection. Future research could involve the comparison to countries with a different combination of institutional characteristics and for which scholars in the dualism literature have already identified multiple institutional divides between standard and atypical workers. This might involve, for instance, a country within the Scandinavian group, which has been found to be the one with the lowest divide in several dimensions (e.g. Leschke, 2009; Jahn and Rosholm, 2013; Benassi and Vlandas, 2015). Alternatively, it might involve one of the core Continental European countries which, as we have seen, present partly similar characteristics with the Southern European countries, but where the institutional divides have been argued to be less extreme (Barbieri, 2009; Leschke, 2009; Muffels, 2015). This would make it possible to test how different institutional configurations impact on the disadvantages experienced by TA workers and to evaluate which possible combination of institutions and policies can minimise those disadvantages.

At the same time, this thesis has shown that atypical workers both between countries and within the same one might not only be more or less precarious, but might also experience qualitatively different types of precariousness. As already mentioned in chapter 3, most comparative research on precariousness has hitherto focused on finding a common conceptualisation of the phenomenon. I would argue that instead future research should focus on empirically experienced disadvantages, allowing for a variety of experiences to be included under the umbrella term of 'precariousness'. More research is needed in order to provide a categorisation of the multifaceted phenomenon of precariousness and how different forms of

precariousness can be related to different contextual factors, both institutional and non-institutional.

Appendix 1

List of interviewees

UK

Name	Gender	Age	Education	Current/Most Recent Occupation
Rachel	F	43	lower-secondary	carer
Bryan	M	35	upper-secondary	shop assistant
Claire	F	32	tertiary	office clerk
Kirsty	F	32	upper-secondary	receptionist
Mary	F	44	upper-secondary	office clerk
Catherine	F	41	upper-secondary	social worker
Mhairi	F	58	upper-secondary	call-centre worker
Stewart	M	30	upper-secondary	office clerk
Susanne	F	38	upper-secondary	secretary
Tom	M	31	tertiary	driver
Steven	M	35	tertiary	office clerk
Chris	M	30	lower-secondary	warehouse worker
Andrew	M	30	lower-secondary	seller
Lucy	F	46	tertiary	office clerk
Mandy	F	35	upper-secondary	nurse
Sarah	F	47	lower-secondary	shop assistant
Cathy	F	33	tertiary	secretary
Lilian	F	45	upper-secondary	office clerk
Paul	M	42	lower-secondary	shop assistant
Edward	M	54	upper-secondary	librarian
Trade Unionist 1	M	-	-	trade unionist
Trade Unionist 2	M	-	-	trade unionist
Katrina	F	-	-	manager in a TA
Charles	M	-	-	activist

Italy

Name	Gender	Age	Education	Occupation
Pietro	M	59	upper-secondary	social worker
Michele	M	39	lower-secondary	warehouse worker
Rita	F	36	tertiary	office clerk
Francesca	F	41	tertiary	shop assistant
Alessandro	M	33	tertiary	shop assistant
Giulia	F	41	upper-secondary	receptionist
Fabio	M	44	lower-secondary	machine tester
Chiara	F	40	upper-secondary	waitress
Claudia	F	44	lower-secondary	social worker
Giada	F	31	upper-secondary	office clerk

Mariangela	F	30	upper-secondary	shop assistant
Giorgio	M	31	tertiary	shop assistant
Dante	M	48	upper-secondary	nurse
Alberto	M	54	lower-secondary	warehouse worker
Stefano	M	38	lower-secondary	call-centre worker
Beatrice	F	52	upper-secondary	social worker
Maria	F	30	upper-secondary	waitress
Rosanna	F	44	upper-secondary	nurse
Marco	M	31	tertiary	office clerk
Paolo	M	36	lower-secondary	office clerk
Trade Unionist 1	M	-	-	trade unionist
Trade Unionist 2	M	-	-	trade unionist
Elena	F	-	-	activist

Appendix 2. Informed Consent

Contact: Alessio Bertolini

PhD student in Social Policy

University of Edinburgh

S1250360@sms.ed.ac.uk

Procedure:

I would like to record the interview, if you are willing, and use the tapes to write my materials.

I will record the interview only with your written consent, and will ask that no personal identifiers be used during the interview, to ensure your anonymity. Please feel free to say as much or as little as you want. You can decide not to answer any question, or to stop the interview any time you want. The tapes and transcripts will be destroyed at the end of the project.

Cost Compensation:

Participation in this study will involve no costs or payments to you.

Confidentiality:

All information collected during the study period will be kept strictly confidential.

If you agree to join this study, please sign your name on the following page.

Declaration:

I, _____, agree to be interviewed for the project 'Temporary Agency Work in Italy and the UK' which is being conducted by Alessio Bertolini of the University of Edinburgh as part of a PhD research project.

I certify that I have been told of the confidentiality of information collected for this project and the anonymity of my participation; that I have been given satisfactory answers to my inquiries concerning project procedures and other matters; and that I have been advised that I am free to withdraw my consent and to discontinue participation in the project or activity at any time without prejudice.

I agree to participate in one or more electronically recorded interviews for this project. I understand that such interviews and related materials will be kept completely anonymous, and transcripts and recordings will be destroyed at the end of the project. and

I understand that my responses may be cited, anonymously, in the PhD dissertation that will result from this research and in academic journals or books.

_____ Date _____

Signature of Interviewee

_____ Date _____

Signature of Interviewer

Appendix 3. Interview Topic Guide

Introduction

Inform Interviewee about:

- The aim of the interview
- How the information will be handled (confidentiality)
- Who will be using the results and how
- Where the results will be made available
- Ask whether they would like to be informed about the results (this can also help in developing a sense of trust and of mutual cooperation)

Background

Socio-demographical aspects:

- Age
- Gender
- Educational Level
- Marital Status
- Children
- Household arrangements (people living in the household)
- Geographical proximity to relatives and friends
- Housing characteristics (e.g. ownership, tenancy, presence of mortgages and loans)

Past employment experience:

- Can you tell me about your employment history so far?
 - Where have you worked before?
 - How long were you employed in every position?
 - Why did you change/quit job?

Reasons for being employed through a Temporary Agency (TA):

- Why did you come to be employed through a TA?
 - What have been the main reasons behind that?

Current employment situation (TA employment):

- Tell me about your current employment situation
 - How long have you been employed through a TA?

- In which jobs have you been employed through the TA?
- (If more than one) How long did each job last?
- (If more than one) Why did that job come to an end?
- (If more than one) How long was the period between one job and the next one?
- What did you do in-between one job and the next one?
- Have you been employed full-time or part-time? Why?
- How many hours do you work in a week?
- How long will the current job last?
- Are you a member of a trade union?

Dimensions of disadvantage

Employment Issues:

- What do you think are the main advantages of being a TA worker? Why?
- What do you think are the main disadvantages of being a TA worker?
 - How does this affect your employment?
 - How does this affect your personal life?
 - Do you think this disadvantage is specific of TA contracts?

Work-related identity:

- In your life, what role does the fact of being employed play for you? Why?
 - How does the fact of being a TA worker affect this?
- Is it important for you to have a salaried employment? In which way?
 - Would you answer differently if you had a permanent/more stable contract?
- Do you feel part of the organization you are working for?
 - Does the fact of being a TA worker affect your sense of belonging? In which way?

Insecurity:

- Which aspects of your employment are most secure? In which way?
- Which aspects of your employment do you perceive as most insecure? In which way?
 - How does this affect your work?
 - How does this affect your personal life?
 - Would you answer differently if you had a different contract? Why?
 - Do you think other employees are better off? In which way?
- Overall, would you consider your employment as insecure? Why?
 - How much do you reckon the fact of being employed through a TA affect your sense of security?
 - How can this situation be improved?

- Who/What do you think is responsible for this (e.g. agency, employer, welfare state, trade unions)?
- Would you like to have more employment security? Why?
 - How do you think your life would change if you had a more secure employment?
 - Do you feel you would have made/ make different decisions in your life if you had a secure employment?

Income:

- What is roughly your pay?
 - What is your hourly pay?
 - What are your average monthly earnings?
- What do you think are the major problems concerning your earnings (e.g. low-pay, income instability)? In which way?
 - Do you think you should be paid more?
 - Do you reckon you should work more hours for a decent quality of life? Why?
 - Is instability/uncertainty of income a problem for you? In which way?
- Do other members of the family contribute to the household income? In which way?
 - How important is their income compared to yours?
- Do you receive any material help from relatives or friends that do not belong to the household?
 - How important is their contribution?
- Have you experienced any problem in having access to any form of credit (e.g. loan, mortgage, credit card)?
 - (If yes) Is this related to your type of employment? In which way?
- Do you know whether you are entitled to any unemployment benefit?
 - Do you think your current employment situation has an effect on your entitlement/the amount of benefit you are entitled to? In which way?
 - Is this a problem for you?
- Do you know whether you are entitled to any form of redundancy/ severance pay at the end of your employment?
 - Have you claimed the benefit? Why?
 - Have you experienced any problem?
- Do you know whether you are entitled to any sickness pay and/or unemployment benefit? Maybe separate?
 - Do you think your current employment situation has an effect on your entitlement/the amount of benefit you are entitled to? In which way?
 - Is this a problem for you?

- Do you know whether you are entitled to a pension at the end of your career?
 - Do you think your current employment situation will affect your pension? In which way?
 - Is this a problem for you?
- Does your employer provide any form of contribution-based scheme (e.g. pensions)?
 - Do you think you would be better off by having a different employment contract? In which way?
 - Is this a problem for you?
- Do you receive any tax credit or allowance?
 - (If no) Do you know whether you are entitled to any?
 - (If no) Do you think you should be entitled to any?
 - (If yes) How relevant are these benefits for your overall income?
 - (If yes) Do you think you should receive more/less? Why?
 - (If yes) What are the major problems in receiving the benefit (e.g. bureaucracy, timing, stigma)?
- Are you worried about the future when it comes to income?
 - What are the reasons why you feel like this?
 - Do you reckon the welfare state has/should have more responsibility (e.g. welfare benefits, services)? In which way?
 - Do you think the agency should have more responsibility? In which way?
 - Do you think your current employer should have more responsibility? In which way?
 - Do you reckon trade unions should have more responsibility? In which way?

Social Support:

- When you have a problem at work, to whom do you talk about it first?
- Do you receive any form of support (e.g. emotional, relational, practical) from your colleagues? Why?
 - Do you think that the fact that you are a TA worker affect this support? In which way?
- Do you receive any support from your line-manager? In which way?
 - Do you think that the fact that you are a TA worker affect this support? In which way?
- Do you receive any support from the TA? In which way?
- Do you receive any support from the trade union? In which way?
 - If not, why is it the case?
 - Have you considered joining a union? Why?
- Who do you think should be more involved when you have a problem? In which way?

- Do you think the State should be more involved in problems related to TA workers?
In which way?
 - In which specific problems do you think it should be more involved?
 - Why do you think it is not involved?

Conclusion

- If you could, would you like to have a different employment contract?
 - Which one? Why?
 - In which aspects do you think this would improve your employment conditions?
 - How difficult do you think it is to find a different employment?
- Are you currently looking for another job? Why?
- Is there anything that you think is relevant but that has not been mentioned?

Thanks the interviewee:

- Thanksgiving for her time and help
- Remind her about the availability of the results and whether she wants to be informed about the results

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